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GENDERED SPACES IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH POETRY

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CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT

The thrust of this thesis is summarized by the following questions: How does contemporary Irish poetry migrate from traditional conceptions of identity drawn on by the cultural nationalism of the Irish Literary Revival, and what effects does this have on understanding gendered and national identity formation? Chapters are on the following: Seamus Heaney, Tom Paulin, Paul Muldoon, Medbh McGuckian, Eavan Boland and Sara Berkeley. These poets are chosen for discussion since their work most effectively engages with the relationship between woman and nation, the representation of gendered national identity, and the importance of feminist and post-colonial theorization. Focusing on poetry North and South of the border from the last fifteen years, the thesis asks how a younger generation of poets provide a response to nationality which is significantly different from their predecessors.

The thesis is composed of three parts: the first understands how the male poets depart from conventional conceptions of the nation with reference to post-colonial theorization; the second explores how feminist theorization informs readings of how the female poets respond to the national; the final part investigates migration in the poetry and problematizes this in terms of post-nationalism. Discussing the issue of deterritorialization in Irish poetry, the thesis notices how as the poets attempt to take flight from the mythologies of nationhood, they undermine the monoliths of gendered and national identity inscribed within Irish political discourse, which is typified at a representative level by the figure of Mother Ireland or Cathleen Ní Houlihan. Investigating the ways in which gender and nation, and the body and space are reinscribed by the poets, the thesis argues that their poetry challenges authentic conceptions of Irish identity and the nation-state, so as to loosen the legacy of a colonial and a nationalist inheritance.

MAIN INTRODUCTION:

GENDERED SPACES IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH POETRY

Irish Poetry and the Theorization of Identity

The approach of this thesis is two-fold: first, it explores identity in terms of

gender and nationality in contemporary Irish poetry; second, it identifies the

points of connection and disconnection between Irish poetry and recent

theorization of identity formation in the fields of post-colonial and feminist

theory. Oscillating between poetry and theory the thesis provides a commentary

that questions the intellectual and political agenda of contemporary Irish poets,

while calling into question the implied divisions between theory, poetry and a

practical politics.

In order to do this, the differing political positions of Irish critics claiming to

eschew and pursue the theorization of national identity are explored. The thesis

draws on the work of Carol Coulter, Luke Gibbons, Colin Graham, Declan

Kiberd, Richard Kearney, Edna Longley, Gerardine Meaney, Gerry Smyth and

Ailbhe Smyth. Noticing how far theory is resisted within the work of Irish

critics, the thesis proves that theory can provide an understanding of the political

and aesthetic concerns of Irish poetry, so as to ask where do theory and poetry

meet, and how far do they challenge one another? These questions are answered

without seeking to privilege poetry and seal it in an artistic vacuum as 'beyond'

theoretically motivated criticism. The thesis argues in three sections that Irish

poetry and criticism can be productively read in terms of the wider contexts of

post-colonial, feminist and post-nationalist theorization of identity, undertaken

by the critics Homi Bhabha, Judith Butler and Michael Shapiro, among others.

Myth and Motherland

There has been some discussion of the connection between gender and nation in

Irish discourse such as Richard Kearney's Field Day pamphlet entitled Myth and

Motherland (1984) and Gerardine Meaney's Sex and Nation: Women in Irish

Culture and Politics (1991). Kearney explains how particularly in nationalist

myth, the Irish woman is connected with Irish territory since the female is

traditionally viewed in terms of Mother Ireland or as Cathleen Ní Houlihan. This

argument is developed in David Cairns and Toni O'Brien Johnson's Gender in

Irish Writing (1991) which contains essays questioning the position of the

feminine subject in relation to Irish nationality. Additionally, the notion of

Ireland as a mother country raped by the imposition of colonial power, is

addressed by Lyn Innes in Woman and Nation (1993).[1] While making the

connection between gender and nation in Irish literature, these studies have paid

little attention to the representation of nationality within contemporary Irish

poetry. Nor have they considered the ways in which previous conceptions of

nationality are being abandoned and critiqued by contemporary poets and critics.

Clair Wills's Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry

(1993) begins to approach the transgressive aspects of nationality and femininity

in Irish political discourse while focusing on the poetry of Tom Paulin, Medbh

McGuckian and Paul Muldoon.[2] In this study, Wills exposes how these poets

undermine traditional sexual representation using 'improper' narratives with the

effect of redefining nationality, and she loosely connects this trend with post-colonial and postmodern theories. However, Wills's study is confined to focusing on poetry from the North of Ireland and does not make detailed comparison with Southern Irish poets. Neither does Wills's commentary on the poems engage in any depth with contemporary theorization of identity formation.

Therefore, an uncovered area for discussion is to explore gender and nation in terms of the relationship between the representation of the national body and national space, in male and female poets from both the North and the South of Ireland. This thesis develops Wills's argument by addressing poets from the South of Ireland, exploring different ways in which nationality is represented, while investigating the importance of territory and the Partition in contemporary Irish poetry as a whole. Asking how far the connection between the Irish territory and the female body is addressed by contemporary poetry, this question will be problematized at a broader level with reference to feminist and post-colonial theorization. Exploring the work of male and female poets, the thesis investigates what effects feminist and post-colonial theories of identity formation have on conceptions of what constitutes 'Woman' and 'Nation'.

Whilst examining the question of identity formation, the thesis asks how far the poetic experience of contemporary Irish poets is one of <u>dispossession</u> and <u>displacement</u>, and considers what effects this has on the language of the poetry. The thesis reads the poetry in terms of migration so as to expand understanding of national and gendered identities. The argument concludes by developing the exploration of 'displacement', 'fluidity' and 'the nomadic' into discussion of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' representations of identity. Hence, the thrust of this thesis may be summarized by the following question: How does contemporary

Irish poetry relate to and abandon the pathos of authenticity that informs

discussion of what constitutes gendered and national identities?

By the phrase 'pathos of authenticity', the thesis refers to the cultural

nationalism of the Irish Literary Revival which invented particular versions of

Ireland and Irishness by looking back to a mythological past, whereby the nation

was gendered as feminine and is typified by William Butler Yeats's

representation of Cathleen Ní Houlihan or Mother Ireland. As Colin Graham

notices in his essay 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity' (1999), which is

focused on in the 'Conclusion', Yeats was a Protestant who claimed to 'know' an

authentic Ireland:

> Yeats's collection of Irish 'peasant' tales is in one sense part of the continued
> popularization of the antiquarianism which had begun in Ireland earlier in the
> century; Yeats's folk and fairy tales are not remarkable but typical in the way
> that they attempt to construct an Irishness ... As medium for the authentic his
> knowledge of authenticity and his ability to recognize it 'infect' him with
> authenticity too.[3]

Nineteenth century constructions of Irishness are also exemplified by John

Lavery's (1856-1941) picture of his wife as 'Cathleen' who is presented

carrying a harp amid a romantic landscape of mists and mountains.[4] This thesis

argues that representations of pure Irishness whereby the nation is feminized are

left behind by contemporary Irish poets as they represent identity in more

complex ways.

Taking Flight From Mother Ireland

Focusing on poetry North and South of the border from the last fifteen years,

chapters are on the following: Seamus Heaney, Tom Paulin, Paul Muldoon,

Medbh McGuckian, Eavan Boland and Sara Berkeley.[5] The 'Conclusion' also

touches on the poems of Michael O'Loughlin and the Gaelic poet, Nuala Ní

Dhomhnaill. These poets have been chosen for discussion since their work most

effectively engages with issues such as the representation of gendered and

national identities, the body and space, and feminist and post-colonial discussion.

There have been other poets who have informed the research as a whole but who

must, for the purposes of this thesis, be regarded as secondary in importance.

Having researched these poets, it was discovered that to discuss more than six for

the thesis would lead to a lack of focus. Poets regretfully left out include:

Siobhán Campbell, Ciaran Carson, Eilé an Ní Chilleanáin, Harry Clifton, Paul

Durcan, Thomas McCarthy, Aidan Carl Mathews, Paula Meehan, Martin

Mooney, Sinéad Morrissey, Richard Murphy and Rita Ann Higgins. These poets

open larger questions that inflect the post-colonial debate and go beyond the

concern with gendered and national identity. For example, had Paula Meehan

and Rita Ann Higgins been discussed, the debate would have broadened into a

more detailed analysis of class and the relevance of performance poetry which

would have gone beyond the scope of the enquiry.

At first glance there are significant differences between the poets chosen for

discussion. It is necessary from the start to acknowledge the different social,

political and ideological contexts existing between separate communities in the

North and South of Ireland, while examining the relationship between national,

spatial, territorial, racial, religious and sexual frontiers as presented in the poetry.

The thesis suggests that what the poets hold in common is their transgression of

these different frontiers as they provide a different understanding of the poetic

self in relation to the world, with the effect of rearticulating concerns with

national and gendered identity in Ireland. Asking how far such a poetic project

can be viewed in terms of post-colonial and feminist political agendas, this thesis

assesses how the poetry of a younger generation provides a response to

nationality which is significantly different from their predecessors. Chapters

explore how Paul Muldoon and Medbh McGuckian shake off the influence of

early work written by Seamus Heaney. In a similar vein, the argument considers

how Sara Berkeley picks up from and leaves behind the concerns of Eavan

Boland.

Regarding the representation of identity in contemporary Irish poetry, the thesis

asks how the poets in differing ways readdress and discard Revivalist myths of

motherland. The first section, 'Ireland and the Post-Colonial', addresses the

movement of contemporary Irish poets and Irish critics away from grounded

conceptions of the nation. The introduction is entitled 'Rhizomes and

Bordercrossings', and frames discussion of the first three poets with an essay

entitled 'The Rhizome' (1983, 1988) by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[6] As

an opening into the theoretical terrain of deterritorialization and bordercrossing,

this section problematizes postmodern theorization of fluid identity in relation to

an Irish context of anti-colonial resistance and with reference to the North which

has not achieved post-colonial status.

Addressing the impulse within contemporary Irish poetry to take to the water

and to take flight out of Ireland, the thesis asks how far this is motivated by an

attempt to loosen the legacy of a colonial and nationalist inheritance. Chapters

explore how the poets' different rewritings of place transform traditional Irish

nationalism, moving away from notions of a pure Irish identity that can be found

by turning to the landscape for inspiration and security. The argument is that the

colonial history and contested geography of Ireland has not offered a stable

terrain for the poets and so Irish poetry presents an uncertain understanding of the subject in relation to nationality.

Chapters on Heaney, Paulin and Muldoon chart the relationship between notions of the postmodern, the post-colonial and Irish writing. The first chapter explores how past poetic representation of the nation provides a foundation against which a younger generation of poets may react. Hence, the chapter investigates the Revivalist discourses of modern Irish poetry as typified by the work of William Butler Yeats and alludes to the importance of Heaney's early poetry for a younger generation of contemporary Irish poets. Discussion focuses on how poetry from Seamus Heaney's Station Island (1984) onwards moves away from traditional models of Ireland and Irish identity into less rooted spaces. The chapter argues against David Lloyd who claims that Heaney's poetry is 'racy of the soil' and rereads Heaney's early poem 'The Tollund Man' (1972) in terms of 'The First Flight' (1984) and 'Tollund' (1996), both of which enter a more international arena that is inhabited by poets such as Paul Muldoon.[7]

The second chapter compares the visionary aspects of Seamus Heaney's Seeing Things (1991) with the recent work of Tom Paulin in Walking a Line (1994).[8] The chapter explores the politics of artistic representation in Paulin's collection which was inspired by the figure of the avant-garde artist Paul Klee, and asks how Klee's work develops Paulin's conception of the relationship between aesthetics and politics which is visited by Heaney. Like Heaney, Paulin has written a number of critical essays and the chapter asks whether Paulin's professed stance in his essays relates to his poetry. Paulin's essays have created a foundation of attitudes which contribute to a republican politics of enlightened rational dissent, but the effects of his recent poetry pay attention to the

problematic of representation and take flight from a foundational politics. One aspect of the argument is that Walking a Line challenges our conception of ideological, physical and territorial frontiers in a way that is comparable with aspects of avant-garde art, postmodern and post-colonial theories. Examining deterritorialization in Walking a Line, the chapter draws on the anti-foundational philosophies of Jean-Jacques Lecercle's conception of 'délire' or falling off the line and Homi Bhabha's post-colonial 'dis-positions'.

Following the visionary and anti-foundational aspects of Paulin's poetry is a comparison with Paul Muldoon. Former discussion is developed, paying attention to the relation between on the one hand, the refusal of monolithic forms of identity and on the other, post-colonial theorization of hybridity. Developing discussion of délire, the chapter explores Muldoon's 'dis-positions', 'doubling' and 'irony', so as to argue that the poetry undermines conventional forms of understanding, while asking what are the political implications of this and how does it affect the way we think of identity? By way of interrogating the conception of Partition in Ireland, there is discussion of Muldoon's 'The Boundary Commission' (1980).[9] Here, the importance of dividing lines, sectarianism and threshold states is read in terms of post-colonial theorization.

The introduction to section two is entitled 'The National Body and Fluid Identities'. This section takes discussion of identity onto a further level with an exploration of how gender inflects the representation of nationality. Here, there is an outline of Irish feminist discussion regarding gendered national identity, and the relationship between national space and the female body. Drawing on the work of the Southern Irish feminists Gerardine Meaney and Ailbhe Smyth, and the French feminists Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, the

discussion positions the context of Irish female poetry alongside a wider feminist debate. Chapters in this section focus on Medbh McGuckian and Eavan Boland to assess how Irish women poets rearticulate myths of Mother Ireland in order to ask whether the issues of gendered national identity can ever be left behind. This section provides a platform from which to move to the final section on Sara Berkeley's 'nomadic subjects'.

The fourth chapter is on the Belfast poet Medbh McGuckian, and provides a point of transition between the Northern male poets and the Southern female poets. This leads to questions such as: how far should McGuckian's work be positioned within a female Irish context, a Northern Irish context or both? Drawing on feminist theory, Clair Wills (1993) has argued that McGuckian's attention to the female body and an aesthetics of privacy challenges the public realm of male dominated politics in the North of Ireland. In addition, Thomas Docherty (1992) has written on McGuckian as a postmodernist poet.[10] Bearing these two critics in mind, McGuckian's poetry is explored in terms of the feminist, postmodern and post-colonial, investigating her representation of space, borderland states and the periphery particularly in On Ballycastle Beach (1988).[11] Drawing on work by Graham Huggan and Edward Soja, the chapter asks whether McGuckian's poetry undermines claims to cartographic representation and the drawing-up of territories. This involves connecting her work with the anti-foundational stance of Muldoon. In addition, Tom Paulin has 'begged to differ' from McGuckian's poetry but the chapter notices how his idea of 'diving off the edge', and Heaney's notion of the poet in 'Station Island' (1984) taking the advice of Joyce and swimming into uncharted waters, is comparable with the movement of McGuckian's work in On Ballycastle Beach

(1988). Comparison of McGuckian with the male poets develops the post-colonial issue of 'deterritorialization' from section one, noticing how McGuckian's poems can be read in terms of Judith Butler's feminist concept of 'disidentification'.

Although the thesis is divided into three sections, the chapters interrelate and cross references are made between the work of different poets. The chapter on McGuckian relates closely to discussion of Eavan Boland's Outside History (1990), In a Time of Violence (1994) and The Lost Land (1998).[12] Boland has paid attention to rewriting sacred versions of Irish history and challenging the Irish literary tradition in favour of a more secular female history that inserts female experience into predominantly patriarchal nationalist discourses. In view of the historical silencing of Irish women's experience and writing, that is typified at an academic level with the 'forgetting' of women writers as when Seamus Deane and colleagues composed the first volumes of the Field Day Anthology (1991), Boland's essays are shown to be important for Irish feminist writers, while her intentions in her prose are problematic and demonstrated as difficult to fulfill in her poetry.[13] This leads to theoretical discussion of the 'inauthentic', 'misrepresentation' and 'irony' within Boland's poems which extends discussion of 'disidentification' in the poetry of McGuckian.

The third section is entitled 'Beyond the Tribe?' and discusses the younger poet, Sara Berkeley, in relation to nomadicity, internationalism and post-nationalism. In the introduction, there is a critique of the way in which anti-nationalism, internationalism and post-nationalism are merged together by Irish commentators as though they have the same meaning. Questioning whether Berkeley can be positioned within an international rather than exclusively Irish

context, the section asks what implications this has for our understanding of Irish poetry. Exploring Berkeley's poetic landscapes, the discussion considers how she departs from the Irish nationality drawn on by Yeats. The migratory aspects of Berkeley's poetry are explored alongside Heaney whose poetry, from <u>Station Island</u> (1984) onwards, moves via the figure of Joyce out of a specifically Irish context.[14]

Richard Kearney's publication <u>Across the Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s</u> (1988) argues that the 'migrant minds' of Irish artists attempt to 'think otherwise'.[15] At a philosophical level, he connects this move outwards from Ireland with the political agenda of post-nationalism so as to provide a critique of traditional nationalist narratives drawn on at the foundation of the Irish Free State that created a strait – jacket of 'Irishness' for people living in Ireland. The third section outlines how Kearney's <u>Postnationalist Ireland</u> (1997) has moved on from his initial publication of <u>Myth and Motherland</u> (1984) which was preoccupied with grounded conceptions of the nation, so as to argue that this movement is comparable with that of the poets under discussion.[16] Critiquing Kearney's work, the final section of the thesis relates back to the first as it problematizes how the concepts of migration and taking flight from Ireland, introduced in the work of Heaney, are developed within contemporary Irish poetry as a whole.

As the thesis brings together post-colonial, feminist and post-nationalist theorization, the discussion makes further comparisons between issues raised in the poems and the thesis as a whole such as: 'deterritorialization', 'délire', 'disposition', 'doubling', 'disidentification', 'the inauthentic', 'misrepresentation' and 'irony'. These themes are explored in detail so as to establish what effect the

concepts of deterritorialization, fluid identity and migration have on our

understanding of gendered and national identity as represented within poetry

from Ireland today. The thesis asks: How far do the poets undermine the pathos

of authenticity upon which the representation of 'Woman' and 'Nation' have

been founded? As a first step towards answering this question, the following

section provides an introduction to post-colonial debate regarding Irish identity

and an outline of the concept of deterritorialization. The introduction to each

section will provide a framework from which to view the poetry as the discussion

understands contemporary poetry alongside contemporary theory, so as to

investigate the intellectual agenda of the poets while noticing the ways in which

the poetry inflects and develops theoretical debate.

'Notes to Main Introduction'

[1] Richard Kearney, Myth and Motherland, (Field Day Pamphlet, No.5, 1984); David Cairns & Toni O'Brien Johnson, Gender in Irish Writing, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991); Lyn Innes, Woman and Nation, (London: Harvester, 1993).

[2] Clair Wills, Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry, (Oxford: University Press, 1993).

[3] Colin Graham, 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity', Ireland and Cultural Theory: the Mechanics of Authenticity, ed., Colin Graham and Richard Kirkland, (London: Macmillan, 1999), p.16.

[4] See Appendices Six which are discussed in the 'Conclusion' with reference to Michael O'Loughlin and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill poems on Cuchulainn and Cathleen.

[5] Cf. Bibliography for the work of the poets on which I intend to focus.

[6] Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, 'The Rhizome', On the Line, [New York: Semiotext(e), 1983], pp.1-69; ''Introduction: Rhizome', A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia, Vol.2, (London: Athlone, 1988), pp.3-26.

[7] Cf. David Lloyd, '''Pap for the Dispossessed': Seamus Heaney and the Poetics of Identity", Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment, (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993), pp.13-40.

[8] Seamus Heaney, Seeing Things, (London: Faber, 1991); Tom Paulin, Walking a Line, (London: Faber, 1994).

[9] Paul Muldoon, 'The Boundary Commission', Why Brownlee Left, (London: Faber, 1980), from New Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), p.38.

[10] Clair Wills, ''Medbh McGuckian: The Intimate Sphere', Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry, (Oxford: University Press, 1993), pp.158-193; Thomas Docherty, 'Postmodern McGuckian', Neil Corcoran, ed., The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland, (Pennsylvania: Dufour, 1992), pp.191-208.

[11] Medbh McGuckian, On Ballycastle Beach, (Dublin: Gallery, 1988, 1995).

[12] Eavan Boland, Outside History, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990); In a Time of Violence, (1994), Collected Poems, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1995), The Lost Land, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998).

[13] Seamus Deane, The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing Vol.3, (Derry: Field Day; London: Faber, 1991).

[14] Heaney, Station Island, (London: Faber, 1984), p.94.

[15] Kearney, ''Introduction: 'Thinking Otherwise'", Across The Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s, ed., Richard Kearney, (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), pp.7-29.

[16] Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy, (London: Routledge, 1997).

SECTION ONE: IRELAND AND THE POST-COLONIAL

RHIZOMES AND BORDERCROSSINGS

Problematizing the Post-Colonial

From the very beginning it is vital to explore the complications involved when using the term 'post-colonial' in relation to Irish writing. First, there has been some critical debate around the term 'post-colonial'. For example, in her essay 'Notes On the Postcolonial' (1992) Ella Shohat accuses post-colonial theory of postmodern theoretical and political ambiguity, a 'dizzying multiplicity of positionalities', 'a-historical and universalizing displacements' and 'depoliticizing implications'.[1] In "'When Was 'The Post-Colonial'? Thinking At The Limit" (1996), Stuart Hall notices how Shohat views the post-colonial as dissolving a politics of resistance because it 'posits no clear domination and calls for no clear opposition'.[2] However, this section will argue that it is precisely such a lack of 'clear domination' that allows recent post-colonial critics, such as Homi Bhabha, to outline a critical approach that puts into play hybrid and hetereogenous identities as forms of resistance against the racial essentialisms upon which imperialism relies.

Shohat complains further of the universalizing tendencies of post-colonial theory as it writes of 'the colonial subject'. She remarks that in the heterogeneity of 'the Third World' 'despite the broad patterns of geo-political hegemony', 'power relations' are 'dispersed and contradictory'.[3] In response to this contention, Hall refers to the work of Ruth Frankenburg and Lata Mani (1993), who far from universalize in their observation that it need not follow that all societies are post-colonial in the same way and that in any case, the post-colonial

does not operate on its own but as a construct internally differentialized by its

intersections with other unfolding relations.[4] As Hall indicates: Ireland,

Australia, Canada, Nigeria, India and Jamaica are not post-colonial replicas of

one another, yet it does not follow that they are not in any way post-colonial.

At the risk of generalization, Hall uses Peter Hulme's definition for the post-

colonial predicament:

> If "post-colonial" is a useful word, then it refers to a process of disengagement
> from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and probably is
> inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of
> phenomena: "post-colonial" is (or should be) a descriptive, not an evaluative,
> term...[5]

This 'process' of disengagement from the 'whole colonial syndrome' that 'is

probably inescapable', will be central to my discussion of poets from the North

of Ireland. The following discussion of the poetry indicates via the work of Hall,

that lines of demarcation or 'frontier effects' are not 'given' but 'constructed'

and that 'political positionalities are not fixed'.[6] This will lead to an

understanding of identity formation within the poetry that is more malleable than

that deployed by traditional nationalist agendas.

At a larger level, the thesis will argue that nationalist disengagement from the

colonial is in danger of reiterating colonial structures and that the poets put

essentialist constructions of identity under pressure. There are problems with

founding a national identity on a negation of the stereotypes which originated in

colonialist discourse. This has been noticed within the Irish context by Seamus

Deane, when he describes the way in which the Irish cultural nationalism of the

Irish Literary Revival, particularly that of W. B. Yeats, celebrated the positive

attributes of the Celt to provide an answer to the view of 'the Celt' which is

found in essays by Matthew Arnold such as 'The Incompatibles' (1878-81) and

in racist colonial discourse such as that of Edmund Spenser in A View of the Present State of Ireland (1596) who regarded the Irish as 'other'.[7] In this way, Irish nationalism accepted the vocabulary that had been given it by colonial discourse, differing only in the positive answer it gave in response to negative colonial representation. Rather than break from the essentialist view of what constitutes Irish identity, the Yeatsian Revival repeated the structures upon which colonialist racism was based with the effect of creating further stereotypes regarding 'Irishness'. An example of this is found in Yeats's play On Baile's Strand (1904) which is set in a scene of 'misty light as of a sea mist' in a Celtic past where heroes such as the fierce 'Cuchulain, King of Muirthemne' stomp the stage. This is a romantic and invented idea of Ireland as the mysterious Emerald Isle where feudal warriors fight between themselves.[8] As Protestant Ascendency writers such as Yeats attempted to forge a national consciousness in the face of colonialism, there was a fine line to be trodden between colonial and nationalist representation.

As Colin Graham notices in his essay 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity' (1999): 'Authenticity's origins in the colonial processes as well as in its radiation from the colonial context need to be comprehended ...'[9] Moreover:

> Authenticity and claims to authenticity underlie the conceptual and cultural denial of dominance. The nation's very reason for being, its logic of existence, is its claim to an undeniable authenticity as a pure expression of the 'real', the obvious, the natural. In the Irish context, claims for authenticity move from the 'revolutionary' (in all its aspects) to the dominant, following the path of the nation.[10]

In this vein, section two will notice how nationalist disengagement from the colonial is in danger of reiterating colonial structures of oppression as Irish women become victims of the legislation of the Irish Free State. In this way, the

newly independent state repeats the master-slave dialectic whereby, in order for

the emerging nation to construct an identity, women become the 'others' of the

new society. This is noticed by the Protestant critic, Carol Coulter who argues in

her pamphlet Ireland: Between the First and the Third Worlds (1990) that

> ... many other elements which were undoubtedly present in Irish nationalism –
> not just at the level of ideology, but expressed in the living people – ranging
> from socialism and feminism to religious scepticism and various forms of
> mysticism, were defeated and their adherents marginalised or forced to keep
> their dissident views to themselves.[11]

As Uri Lotman has noticed, a national culture requires unity, the introduction of

order and the elimination of contradictions.[12]

As the poetry of the working class Dublin poet Paula Meehan indicates,

'Irishness' is fractured by gender and class struggles as well as religion and race.

For example, her collection entitled Mysteries of the Home (1991) writes of

'ordinary people' such as the 'Woman Found Dead behind Salvation Army

Hostel': 'the purple, the eerie green of her bruises,/ the garish crimson of her

broken mouth'.[13] Alternatively, Rita Ann Higgins's collection Witch in the

Bushes (1988) contains poems about domestic violence, such as 'It Wasn't the

Father's Fault' and 'She Is Not Afraid of Burglars', where children and even the

family dog are represented as victims of patriarchal abuse. Other poems by

Higgins demonstrate how Irish national experience is hardly cohesive but riddled

with rifts between citizens. For instance, 'It's All Because We're Working

Class' connects with the concerns of 'Some People', where there are some who

'know what it's like' 'to be in hospital unconscious for the rent man' or 'to be

dead for the coal man' - 'sorry mammy passed away in her sleep'– 'and other

people [who] don't'.[14]

In view of the fracturing apparent in conceptions of the nation, post-colonial theory penned by Homi Bhabha has moved away from nationalist preoccupations with the binary relation between colonizer and colonized, towards less essentialist understandings of identity. The thesis examines this movement away from the limits of national identity as imposed by the nation-state to argue that the poetry also offers us more flexible representations of identity with the effect of establishing sophisticated ways of thinking about decolonization that takes into account the way in which national identity is fragmented and discontinuous, rather than unified and uncontradictory.

In addition to debate over the term post-colonial, there has been disagreement over whether the island of Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the North of Ireland can be called colonial, post-colonial or neo-colonial.[15] Depending on where you stand, the North may be viewed as a province of Britain or as one of the last remaining British colonies. In this way, the South can be labelled post-colonial because it became a Republic in 1949. However, the Northern critic, Edna Longley, has difficulties with this view and questions the helpfulness of a post-colonial vision for Ireland, resenting 'intellectual holiday romances in a post-colonial never-never land'. Longley prefers to compare Ireland with Bosnia and quotes the Croats calling themselves 'the Ulster of Yugoslavia'.[16]

It is worth unpicking why Longley turns to the Bosnian rather than the post-colonial comparison. For instance, there are other unstable and divided states in Europe such as Northern and Southern Italy, Eastern and Western Germany, and the Basque country of Spain which Longley ignores. Using the Bosnian example, her comment builds on the myth of Europe as a tortured place of ethnic and religious conflict, and in so doing, she ignores the colonial dimension of the

war in Ulster. Longley's connection between Bosnia and Belfast avoids a more obvious colonial comparison such as that between Ireland and South Africa. Her comment attempts to side step the colonial status of Ulster, a history of imperialist invasion, the fact that the Unionist community are not an indigenous people and that the territory of Ulster was taken from the native Irish.[17] What is helpful about Longley's remark is that in her comparison with former Yugoslavia, she reiterates the fierce attention that is given to notions of territory, boundaries, ethnicity, identity and religion that is common to both Bosnia and Belfast. In addition, Longley's comment alludes to the fractured histories and unstable geographies of Ireland and Yugoslavia. It is precisely the instability of territory, the epistemic violence of colonialism and the transgression of frontiers that will be explored with reference to the poetry.

Seamus Heaney is situated opposite Longley on the Catholic minority side of the barricades. However, he is paradoxically closer to Longley than either might think when he admits: 'From the beginning I was very conscious of boundaries'.[18] Both Longley and Heaney are all too aware of the divided communities living in the North and what Heaney has called the 'split culture of Ulster'.[19] This notion of a divided consciousness will inform readings of national identity particularly in relation to Heaney, Paulin and Muldoon. Longley and Heaney write from an island that has been slashed across by the Partition but they write from different countries. For example, Longley and Heaney have a differing awareness of boundaries since they live on different sides of the Partition. Heaney's move South in 1972 was a conscious decision to leave the British colony that was originally his home. This move demonstrated that the border could be transgressed in both real and symbolic terms. Heaney's

attention to borderlines will serve as a point of departure for this first section which will problematize representative space and the territory of the text.

Addressing the impulse within Northern Irish poetry to take flight out of Ireland in an attempt to loosen the legacy of a colonial and nationalist inheritance, this section discusses how the recent poetry of Seamus Heaney from Station Island (1984) onwards, draws on the mythological bird man Mad Sweeney, with the effect of moving away from authentic versions of Irish identity into less grounded spaces.[20] Chapters investigate the ways in which the national space is reinscribed by Heaney, Paulin and Muldoon with the effect of challenging previous more mythological conceptions of identity drawn on by Yeats. Poetic concern with flight will be explored with reference to theorization of the sublime and deterritorialization.

Deterritorialization and the Rhizome

In an essay entitled 'The Rhizome', Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce the rhizome in terms of an underground consciousness, and as a model for the representation of identity and deterritorialization. Rhizomatic thought has been used and abused widely by post-colonial, postmodern and feminist writers as they look to the process of '*l'enracinement*' rather than '*une racine totalitaire*'. For instance, Stuart Hall offers a Deleuzian perspective when he argues that identity is "not the so-called return to our roots but a coming-to-terms-with our 'routes'".[21] The postmodern theorist, Thomas Docherty, touches on the relationship between Irish poetry and rhizomatics in his investigations of Medbh McGuckian and Seamus Heaney.[22] While the feminist philosophers, Rosi

Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, also discuss the positive and negative aspects of the rhizome as a metaphor for feminist deterritorialization.[23]

Deleuze and Guattari begin their discussion noting how in 'a book, as in everything else, there are lines of articulation or segmentation, strata, territorialities; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and of destratification'.[24] Writing marks out territories and takes particular lines of articulation yet there are also moments when these lines take flight and are destratified. Gaining momentum, their discussion of the rhizome takes off and is described in the following way:

> As an underground stem a rhizome is absolutely distinct from roots and radicels. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. Plants with a root or radicles can be rhizomorphic in all other respects (the question is whether botany, in its specificity, is not completely rhizomorphic). Even some animals are rhizomorphic, when they live in packs like rats. Burrows are rhizomorphic in all their functions: as habitat, means of provision, movement, evasion, rupture.[25]

The key words in this playful statement are: 'movement', 'evasion' and 'rupture'. It is important to acknowledge that Deleuze and Guattari's use of the rhizome focuses on metaphorical modes of argument in order to suggest alternative kinds of philosophy and representation. The rhizome becomes politicized in the argument as an underground network which branches off into infinity, continually moving, refusing the monolithic or the static, substituting binary structures with multiplicity, pluralism, strategies of inclusion and, by implication, a politics of difference.

On the one hand, Deleuze and Guattari argue that there are more rooted sorts of conception such as the image of the tree of Western knowledge or the search for certainties that informs Descartes in Discours de la Méthode (1637) and Meditations (1641) which provided a Leibnitzian monadology or foundational philosophy.[26] On the other hand, the rhizome is anti-foundational as it branches

out underground in all directions with no beginning nor end. In 'Treatise on Nomadology', Deleuze and Guattari make alignments between the rhizome and nomadicity which works against Cartesian thought with liberating potential:[27] 'There are no points or positions in a rhizome, as one finds in a structure, tree or roots. There are only lines'.[28] The rhizome refuses to put down roots, to ground representation or to find a transcendental signifier, end-point or telos. Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari note that any line of flight or move towards deterritorialization is made within not outside of representation: 'The line of flight is part of the rhizome'.[29] In this way, the rhizome provides a metaphor for post-colonial decolonization.

Examining decolonization, Deleuze and Guattari attack the binaries or dualisms that are the enemy and the centralisms of Cartesian philosophy as they notice how 'Western reality' or imperialism is argued to rely on root-foundations, promoting a false sense of unity in the face of fragmentation. Of course, here it is useful to note how they essentialize Western reality in order to come to this conclusion. Suggesting that identity is fractured rather than grounded and unifed, they advise: 'A rhizome-book, [is] no longer dichotomous, tap-rooting or fasciculated. Never put down roots, nor plant even though it may be difficult not to fall back into these old ways'.[30] The new(er) way is always to be on the move or nomadic, and the rhizome is composed/discomposed of shifting directions. Forever in transit, the rhizome is neither beginning nor end, 'but always in the middle'.[31] Discussion of the rhizome has provided post-colonial thinking with a metaphor for imagining the transgression of boundaries and the attainment of a middle ground which is theorized by Homi Bhabha in

The Location of Culture (1994) as a hybrid space of interrelating differences, and

this will be explored alongside the in-between spaces represented in the poetry.[32]

The chapters in this section will explore how hybrid and rhizomatic readings of

identity are not unrelated to the migrant movement of contemporary Irish poetry

which is typified by Heaney's use of Mad Sweeney. Sections two and three

develop discussion of the rhizomatics of Irish poetry from the North, by

investigating it in relation to feminist and post-nationalist politics. Comparing

how the poets move from reterritorialization into deterritorialization, the

following chapters will argue that they provide us with unheimlich

representations of space and national territory. In relation to this, the politics of

poems that reside in a middle ground at the boundary between contesting

identities will be questioned.

Bordercrossings and Sectarianism

In Patterns of Dissonance (1991), the feminist philosopher, Rosi Braidotti also

attacks Cartesian thought, and addresses the rhizome as a nomadic 'system'

which travels and contests borderlands.[33] Likewise, border transgression has

been theorized in an Irish academic context by Ailbhe Smyth who has attacked

the formation of frontiers within Irish culture and political discourse. In her

paper 'Borderline Cross Talk' (1998) which she delivered to the opening

conference of 'The Women-on-Ireland Network', Smyth turned to the liminal

spaces of feminist and post-colonial political theory in order to suggest more

malleable modes of identity formation.[34] This involves thinking otherwise or

towards 'the other', transgressing territorial and ideological boundaries that

uphold sectarianism as a way of ethically forging a differential perspective that

embraces alterity rather than seeks to delimit subjectivities within a fixed model

of identification. This first section will ask how male poets from the North

present a poetry of border transgression with a view to elaboration in the

following sections on how such a project is also undertaken in differing ways by

the female poets and a younger generation who have migrated from Ireland.

For the Southern Irish critic Declan Kiberd, the crossing of borders is

understood in terms of a 'patchwork quilt' of identities and he suggests the

formation of identity is dialogic. In Inventing Ireland (1995), Kiberd develops

the idea of identity being a perpetual dialogue and draws on the Myth of Babel,

where God punishes 'Semite imperialists who built their own tower "as high as

heaven"'.[35] Kiberd reads the myth as a warning against 'all who would seek to

impose an official language of enlightenment'; the 'builders of the tower were

guilty of wanting to make a name for themselves'.[36] Here we can see a sympathy

for Bakhtinian dialogism which also imagines that language is essentially

'dialogic' and that every speech act springs from previous utterances, being

structured in expectation of a future response. This has implications beyond the

field of literary studies as it conveys that a given utterance may be, not just the

representation of something in the world, but also a representation of another

speech act about that thing.[37] In addition, Mikhail Bakhtin's essay 'From the

Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' ([1940], 1967), notices 'cultural bilinguism',

the hybridity of languages, 'other-languagedness' or the 'polyglot' which would

surely appeal to Homi Bhabha.[38] This notion of a never-ending dialogue,

translation or negotiation between terms can be imagined at a political level as

more democratic since, in constant process, no one term is allowed an end-point

or to dominate an-'other'. Such a liberal vision is seductive yet it is hardly constitutive of a practical politics of negotiation where decisions will inevitably be made that exclude certain personalities.

What is important in Kiberd's conclusion to Inventing Ireland (1995) is the way his dialogic model leads to the vision of the formation of plural identities in Ireland rather than a reliance on traditional nationalist models of Mother Ireland or the Emerald Isle wrapped in a green flag:

> If the notion of "Ireland" seemed to some to have become problematic, that was only because the seamless garment once wrapped like a green flag around Cathleen ní Houlihan had given way to a quilt of many patches and colours, all beautiful, all distinct, yet all connected too. No one element should subordinate or assimilate the others: Irish or English, rural or urban, Gaelic or Anglo, each has its part in the pattern.[39]

Of course, such a vision of the multicultural is problematic when one patch in the quilt wishes to dominate or, at a dialogic level, to shout down others, while another patch may withdraw from discussion altogether. To ignore this is to overlook a history of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland in favour of a liberal utopian vision that, although attractive, simply does not hold even in the light of peace negotiation. Also, Kiberd does not ask the important question of conflict analysis which is who exactly would do the needlework or mediate between these different patches of identity.

Such debate about identity formation and achieving a politics of difference for marginalized groups exists outside of Ireland within the field of post-colonial studies. For example, Gyan Prakash imagines an emancipating politics for the colonial dispossessed. He uses postmodern theory to attack a Western humanist tradition (which he strategically essentializes) and posits 'a rainbow alliance shared among oppositional voices'.[40] Drawing on the work of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, Prakash demonstrates how this rainbow alliance between

terms exists at a textual level. This would be a system that draws attention to the open-endedness of identity, and the changing and disparate aspects of identity formation, that flies in the face of nationalist and colonial reliance on essentialist versions of identity.

However, in his essay 'Culture's In-Between' (1996), Homi Bhabha acknowledges the problems implicit with taking flight and crossing the frontiers towards multicultural versions of identity:

> These borderline negotations of cultural difference often violate liberalism's deep commitment of representing cultural diversity as plural choice. Liberal discourses on multiculturalism experience the fragility of their principles of 'tolerance' ... In addressing the multicultural demand, they encounter the limits of their enshrined notion of 'equal respect' ...[41]

In view of Bhabha's remarks and the Irish context, a multicultural vision seems sadly removed from a history of sectarianism where 'tolerance' often wears thin. The following chapters demonstrate how post-colonial discussion of deterritorialization initiated in Deleuze, the sectarianism and border crossing alluded to in Kiberd's textual metaphor, the politics of difference of Prakash and Richard Kearney's philosophy is problematized by Bhabha, and informs understanding of the representation of identity in the poems of Heaney, Paulin and Muldoon. Discussion outlines how the male Northern poets regard national space to ask: what are the implications of deterritorialization and border transgression in their poetry, at aesthetic and political levels, and what does this suggest about the representation of identity in contemporary poetry from the North of Ireland?

'Notes to Section One'

[1] Ella Shohat, 'Notes On the Postcolonial', Social Text, 31/2, 1992, p.101.

[2] Stuart Hall, 'When was "the post-colonial"? Thinking at the Limit', Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, eds., The Post-Colonial Question, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.242.

[3] Shohat. p.101.

[4] Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani, "Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, 'Postcoloniality' and the Politics of Location, Cultural Studies, 7, 2, 1993.

[5] Hall, p.246; Peter Hulme, 'Including America', Ariel, 26, 1, 1995, p.120.

[6] Hall, p.244.

[7] Seamus Deane, 'The Celtic Revival, 1780-1880', A Short History of Irish Literature, (Indianna: Notre Dame University Press, 1986, 1994), p.84; Edmund Spenser, A View of the Present State of Ireland, ed., W.L.Renwick, (London: Eric Partridge, 1934), pp.62-3.

[8] William Butler Yeats, On Baile's Strand, Modern Irish Drama, ed., John P. Harrington, (London: Norton, 1991), p.12. Cf. Declan Kiberd, Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).

[9] Colin Graham, 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity', Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity, eds., Colin Graham and Richard Kirkland, (London: Macmillan, 1999), p.9.

[10] Ibid., p.8.

[11] Carol Coulter, Ireland: Between the First and the Third Worlds, (Dublin: Attic, LI.P., 1990), p.7.

[12] Uri Lotman, 'On The Semiotic Mechanism of Culture', New Literary History, Vol.IX, No.2, pp.227. Also cited by David Cairns & Shaun Richards in Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture, (Manchester: University Press, 1988), p.8.

[13] Paula Meehan, 'Ard Fheis' and 'Woman Found Dead Behind Salvation Army Hostel', Mysteries of the Home, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1991, 1996), pp.14-5, p.34.

[14] Rita Ann Higgins, Sunny Side Plucked: New & Selected Poems, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1986, 1996), pp.38, 40, 41, 68-9.

[15] For example, the Republic of Ireland can be viewed as post-colonial but where does this leave the island of Ireland? Whereas hard line Unionists would view Ulster as a province of Britain, republican nationalists view Ulster as a British colony. Alternatively, in view of American financial support received by both the Republic of Ireland and Ulster, Ireland can be considered in terms of the neo-colonial or as economically looking to US funding. However, bearing in mind the entrance of the Republic of Ireland into the EU, it may also be viewed as European or having been dependent on EEC funding. At a basic level then, the island of Ireland may be understood according to colonial, post-colonial, neo-colonial and European definitions.

[16] Edna Longley, The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism In Ireland, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994), p.61.

[17] There are further problems with Longley's comparison between former Yugoslvia and Ulster. Firstly, the conflict between religious groups in the former Yugoslavia was not a conflict within Christianity as with Ulster but a war between Greek Orthodox Serbs, Muslim Bosnians and Catholic Croatians. Secondly, unlike Ulster, Croatia and Slovenia could claim independence fairly easily because the ethnic population matched the state and there was only a very tiny ethnic minority in each country. Cf. table stating numbers of different ethnic populations in Croatia and Serbia in Gerald Segal, 'The New Europe', The World Affairs Companion: The Essential One Volume Guide to Global Issues, (London: Simon and Schuster, 1987, 1991), p.158. This is unlike the North of Ireland where a Protestant minority have ruled over a Catholic majority, and where there is such a patchwork quilt of identities that it is difficult to separate out territories in the way that occurred in the former Yugoslavia.

[18] Neil Corcoran, Seamus Heaney, (London: Faber, 1986), p.13.

[19] Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978, (London: Faber, 1980), p.35. Cf. Henry Hart, 'History, Myth, and Apocalypse in Heaney's North', Contemporary Literature, Vol.30, No.3, Fall, 1989, p.397.

[20] Seamus Heaney, Sweeney Astray, (London: Faber, 1983); Station Island, (London: Faber, 1984).

[21] Stuart Hall & Paul du Gay, eds., Questions of Cultural Identity, (London: Sage, 1996), p.4.

[22] Thomas Docherty, 'Postmodern McGuckian', Neil Corcoran, ed., The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland, (Pennsylvania: Dufour, 1992), pp.191-208. Discussing the rhizome in relation to McGuckian, Docherty chooses to view McGuckian's deterritorialization in terms of postmodernism rather than feminism or the post-colonial. He also makes a passing reference to the rhizome in After Theory, Second Edition, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1996), pp.107-111. Later in this edition, he provides discussion of Seamus Heaney's poetry loosely in terms of deterritorialization although not directly making the connection with Deleuze and Guattari, pp.222-225.

[23] Rosi Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of women in Contemporary Philosophy, trans., Elizabeth Guild, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Elizabeth Grosz, 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics', Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy, Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski, eds., (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.187-213.

[24] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, eds, 'The Rhizome', On The Line, [New York: Semiotext(e), 1983], p.2. Also reproduced in 'Introduction: Rhizome', A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia, (London: Athlone, 1988, 1996), pp.3-25.

[25] Ibid., On The Line, p.10.

[26] René Descartes (1596-1650), Discourse on Method and Meditations, (London: Penguin, 1968).

[27] Deleuze & Guattari, '1227: Treatise on Nomadology: - The War Machine', A Thousand Plateaus, (London: Athlone, 1988, 1996), pp.351-423.

[28] Deleuze & Guattari, On the Line, p.15.

[29] Ibid., p.18.

[30] Ibid., p.52.

[31] Ibid., p.47.

[32] Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994).

[33] Rosi Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy, trans., Elizabeth Guild, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

[34] Ailbhe Smyth, 'Borderline Cross Talk', 'The Women on Ireland Network Conference': "Women and Ireland: Social, Historical and Cultural Perspectives", St. Mary's University College Strawberry Hill, Saturday 27th June, 1998.

[35] Kiberd, Inventing Ireland, p.636.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader, ed., David Lodge, (London: Longman, 1988), pp.124-156.

[38] Ibid., pp.141-3,

[39] Kiberd, Inventing Ireland, p.563.

[40] Gyan Prakash in Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook, 'After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism and Politics in the Third World', Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol.34, No.1, p.150.

[41] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Culture's In-Between', ed., Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, Questions of Cultural Identity, (London: Sage, 1996), p.54.

CHAPTER ONE

BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE: THE PLACE OF SEAMUS HEANEY

he was revolted by the thought of known places
and dreamed strange migrations

Seamus Heaney, Sweeney Astray, (1983)[1]

The Quaking Sod

This chapter introduces the work of Seamus Heaney as providing a foundation for a

more recent generation of poets, in particular, Paul Muldoon and Medbh McGuckian

whom Heaney taught at Queen's University Belfast. It argues that Heaney's early

attention to the Irish bogland in Wintering Out (1972) and North (1975) is rejected

by his recent poems which take flight from preoccupations on land.[2] The

implications of this argument will be that it is necessary to read a younger generation

of Northern poets in terms of Heaney's later poetry in order to free contemporary

Irish poetry from reading it purely in terms of the legacy of William Butler Yeats.

The chapter explores how the early poem 'The Tollund Man' from Wintering Out

which dwells in the Irish bog may be reassessed in relation to his recent poem

'Tollund' from The Spirit Level (1996).[3] Referring to the figure of mad Sweeney,

the migrant bird king, nomad and exile, the chapter charts the movement of

Heaney's poetry from 'The Tollund Man' to 'Tollund' in order to assess how

Heaney's poetry is placed between impulses to dig the past and fly the future.

By way of contextualizing Heaney's poetry within this debate, the chapter begins

with discussion of W. B. Yeats. This leads to argument against David Lloyd's

assertion in his essay 'Pap for the Dispossessed' (1993) that Heaney "seeks to give

an Irish 'bend'" to 'cultural tradition',

> ... grafting it on roots which are identified as rural, Catholic, and, more remotely,
> Gaelic. That grafting is enabled by the return to place, a reterritorialization in a
> literal sense initially, which symbolically restores the interrupted continuity of
> identity and ground.[4]

Lloyd's essay does not cover Heaney's poetry or critical writing after 1984 which

becomes a transitional moment in his work. If we take into account the poetry from

Station Island (1984) onwards, we can see a more complex response to identity than

Lloyd suggests, calling into question roots and continuity, and in this way the later

poetry moves towards a present of deterritorialization rather than a past of

reterritorialization.

The chapter focuses on the poems 'The First Flight' and Making Strange' from

Station Island, 'and Lightenings' from Seeing Things (1991). These are only a few

poems that have been chosen as being representative of Heaney's extensive oeuvre.

The thrust of this chapter is summarized in the following way: when identity is

drawn up by lines of containment or exclusion, what epistemological/ideological and

spatial/territorial boundaries does Heaney identify with? The chapter notices how

far Sweeney/Heaney seek to transgress ideological and territorial boundaries, and

discusses what effects this has on the representation of identity in his poetry.

Outlining the implications of attempting to find a middle space between extremes,

the chapter assesses how far Heaney's representation of in-between spaces where he

becomes a middle man, undermines the apartheid drawn up by the Partition and

sectarian politics.

In order to address these concerns it is necessary to explore the preoccupation with the land or what will be called 'grounding' in Irish writing. With pessimism, Daniel Corkery described Irish identity as 'a quaking sod': 'Everywhere in the mentality of the Irish people are flux and uncertainty. Our national consciousness may be described, in a native phrase, as a quaking sod. It gives no footing'.[5] Corkery locates 'the Irish people' as a collective 'national consciousness' that represents itself via a 'native phrase' which is evocative of their landscape. This logic is bound up at a metaphorical level with notions of 'imagined communities' and 'states of fantasy' whereby what is imagined is an idea of Ireland's state of mind.[6] For Corkery, 'the Irish' are 'a people' with 'no footing' since due to a history of colonialism, they have been uprooted, their land and native language disturbed by colonial intervention so that they are denied any firm ground of their own from which to make a footing, stake their claim or identify themselves. This comment alludes to clear divisions between 'Irish' and non-'Irish'; colonizers and colonized. This has the effect of excluding those whose 'consciousness' does not agree with Corkery's sense of the 'national' and it excludes those who do not share a nationalist 'mentality'.

Corkery imagines a sense of community between 'Irish people' while at the same time describing their lack of a firm basis from which to communicate with themselves, one another and the rest of the world. His comments are symptomatic of the history of colonial imposition in Ireland, yet Corkery overlooks the complexities of writing for 'the Irish people' in a sectarian political context where Irish, Anglo-Irish, Ulster Scots and British identities inhabit the 'Irish' landscape.

For example, Unionists may view the Partition as dividing 'us' from 'them', whereas nationalists may view it as dividing 'us' from 'ourselves'. Regarding the sectarian context of Ulster, the Irish landscape and political geography is assessed in differing ways.

This chapter explores how Heaney's early poetry engages with the problematic of self-consciously forging a 'post-colonial' consciousness in the face of Corkery's 'quaking sod' and in view of the divisions between 'Irish people' in the North of Ireland. For Corkery, the notion of 'the Irish consciousness' was bound-up with the Irish language and metaphor. It is the metaphorical reimagining of Irish identity as articulated in the poetry that is a prime concern of this chapter and thesis. The 'English' imagined the 'Irish' as belonging to the bog, so to compare 'Irish' consciousness with a 'quaking sod' is to mimic the colonial stereotype and to locate 'the Irish' in 'Irish' ground. However, the chapter argues that Heaney's bog poems insist less on attending to the 'Irish' landscape as a source for 'Irish' identity than Lloyd suggests. Rather, they move away from preoccupations with the land, rejecting traditional 'nationalist' endeavours to provide 'the people' with a straightforward politics of repossession. This argument will entail acknowledging the differences between 'nationalist' and 'post-colonial' positions, and asking how far does Heaney's poetry illustrate these differences?

Reterritorialization and the Revival

In The Rough Field (1972), John Montague evocatively views Northern Ireland

according to an Old Rhyme: 'As a severed head' speaking 'with a grafted tongue'.

Where there is:

> The whole landscape a manuscript
> We had lost the skill to read,
> A part of our past disinherited.[7]

Beneath the colonized landscape lies a buried native tradition which like the lost

Irish language cannot be read. In relation to this, Lloyd recalls the slogan of The

Nation which "succinctly expresses the ramifications of the nationalist project: 'To

foster public opinion and make it racy of the soil'". Lloyd explains how the

fictiveness of building a national consciousness is renaturalized through the

metaphor of grounding:

> ... through its rootedness in the primary soil of Ireland, the mind of Ireland will
> regain its distinctive savour. The 'root' meaning of culture is implicit here, and
> certainly, insofar as a literary culture is envisaged as the prime agent and ground of
> unification, it is literary taste which is subject to the most rigorous
> 'reterritorialization'.[8]

This may be compared with the effects of Yeats's mythologization of Ireland in his

poetry whereby a sense of motherland and nationalist history are sometimes woven

together.

Although Yeats is obviously different from Heaney in his position as an Anglo-

Irish Protestant from the South who wrote at the beginning of the century, Lloyd's

notion of a national consciousness being renaturalized through metaphors of

grounding is evocative of some of Yeats's poems. Yeats does not seem to be

purposefully fleeing from the nets of national representation. On the contrary, his

Revivalist stance argues that '[t]here is no great literature without nationality, no great nationality without literature'.[9] In response to this, Seamus Deane comments that Yeats's belief is in the efficacy of art in the creation of a national consciousness. Moreover, Heaney writes that

> ... in the West of the country, at Ballylee, there is the Norman tower occupied by W.B. Yeats as a deliberate symbol of his poetic effort, which was to restore the spiritual values and magical world that Spenser's armies and language had destroyed.[10]

A starting point therefore is to explore the relationship between poetry and cultural nationalism in Yeats poems 'The Rose Tree', Easter 1916' and 'To Ireland in the Coming Times'.[11] These poems are from different stages in Yeats's poetic career, and there is not space here to chart the developments and changes that take place in Yeats's extensive oeuvre. Nevertheless, these poems can be compared with one another in terms of what Declan Kiberd identifies as the audacity of Yeats's project to invent an ideal Ireland and breathe it into being, and can be contrasted with the effects of Heaney's poetry.[12]

'The Rose Tree' from the collection, Michael Robartes and the Dancer (1921), with its jaunty rhythms and rhymes is part of a context of the popular language of Irish folklore and song, and it reads as a traditional celebration of blood sacrifice. In the conversation between James Connolly and Patrick Pearse, the latter concludes that since 'all the wells' of Ireland 'are parched away': 'There's nothing but our own red blood/ Can make a right Rose Tree'. According to this story, the rose of Ireland must be restored or 'watered' by the blood of those who are willing to fight and die for her, and only in this way will the rose/ Ireland become green/ a nation. Ireland is seduced by a history of 'wrongs' or colonialism but also by the words of

the poet. David Cairns and Shaun Richards argue that in Joseph Plunkett's poem 'The Little Black Rose Shall Be Red At Last' there is a comparable meshing of patriotism and the sexual where the poet dedicates his life to the revivification of Ireland.[13] Yeats's poem rehearses the connections between nationality and popular myth, nationality and blood sacrifice, and nationality and a feminine Ireland, which were used by the poet and political leader Patrick Pearse.

As an Irish nationalist, Pearse himself became a mythologized figure who stood for the notion of the sacred blood sacrifice of one man which leads to the redemption of Ireland. He was aware of the power of Gaelic myth, in particular the story of Cuchulainn, to create national heroes. Lloyd argues that 'nationalism can be said to require an aesthetic politics quite as much as a national aesthetics'.[14] In this way, popular myth or literature and politics merge. Pearse features once more in <u>Michael Robartes and the Dancer</u> in the poem 'Easter 1916' (1921), but as one of the dead who are commemorated in literature, rather than as an active political voice as in 'The Rose Tree'. The poem itself shifts between writing a nationalist politics and questioning the ability to represent a national identity in literature. For example, stanza one imagines how nationalist myth can transform the dull reality of a 'grey' and mediocre Dublin where 'motley' is worn rather than the nationalist green of a romantic Ireland. The rebels' heroism, death and violence forges a 'terrible beauty', and problematizes the myth of blood sacrifice which was lauded by Pearse. The poem, like the rebels' act, also provides potential for transformation whereby '[a]ll's changed, changed utterly'; as they are remembered, the rebels become transformed in the 'song' of the poem.

Yet the poem offers no single definitive response to this sacrifice; it is plagued with questions. Perhaps '[t]oo long a sacrifice/ Can make a stone of the heart'. Moreover, 'Hearts with one purpose alone' might be narrow-minded or fanatical; '[e]nchanted to a stone' which is fixed, unchanging and devoid of compassionate vision. In turn, the poem risks becoming a metaphorical gravestone that writes the memory of the rebels and adds to a static representation of Irish national identity. This reinscription has the potential to become yet another bloody and disabling myth. On the one hand, 'Easter 1916' expresses a profound anxiety over how national representation in poetry can transform political realities and thereby perpetuate more violence. On the other hand, it is testimony to how political realities and the myths of Irish nationalist politics have the power to overwhelm poetry.

Comparably, an earlier poem entitled 'To Ireland in the Coming Times' from The Rose (1893), 'ponders well' 'things discovered in the deep/ Where only body's laid asleep'. For inspiration, the poet goes back to the dead and digs in a crypt of corpses or a subconscious dream state. This is a ghostly poem built around death and 'faeries, dancing under the moon'. Hence, Ireland is commemorated in the poem as a 'Druid land, a Druid tune!' where the poet 'sang to sweeten Ireland's wrong'. Here, Ireland is part of a dream world or dark unconscious that is excavated by the poet. In view of this, it is worth noticing the title of the poem: 'To Ireland in the Coming Times'. The poem dwells on a past 'dream' of Ireland and ends in the past tense as a tribute to Ireland in the 'coming times' or future. The past must be dug-up in order to create a future since, for Yeats, tradition informs a sense of the future. In

view of an Irish nationalist agenda, the poem invents a Romantic image of Ireland

which stirs the poet's heart to write a song for the people. Naming Davis, Mangan

and Ferguson, the poet calls-up other poets and Protestant figures within Irish

nationalism whose use of political allegory in their work provided a touchstone for

Revivalists.[15] Using loaded images such as the rose, blood and Mother Ireland,

these poems problematize the desire to build a national literature and redefine Irish

territory on Yeats's own terms, whereby national representation is caught between

the past and the future.

The way in which Yeats's poetry finds itself caught between past and future can be

compared with Heaney. To foreground this a little, it is worth drawing on work by

Hannah Arendt from Between Past and Future (1958) from which the title of this

chapter originates. Arendt uses Faulkner who argued: "the past is never dead, it is

not even past". Arendt explains:

> This past, moreover, reading all the way back into the origin, does not pull back but
> presses forward, and it is, contrary to what one would expect, the future which
> drives us back into the past. Seen from the viewpoint of man, who always lies in
> the interval between past and future, time is not a continuum, a flow of interrupted
> succession; it is broken in the middle, at the point where "he" stands; and "his"
> standpoint is not the present as we usually understand it but rather a gap in time
> which "his" constant fighting, "his" making a stand against past and future, keeps in
> existence. Only because man is inserted into time and only to the extent that he
> stands his ground does the flow of indifferent time break into tenses, it is this
> insertion – the beginning of a beginning, to put it into Augustinian terms – which
> splits up the time continuum into forces which then, because they are focused on the
> particle or body that gives them their direction, begin fighting with each other and
> acting upon man ...[16]

Arendt goes back to Saint Augustine to argue that understandings of time move from

the past history of a life instantaneously through to a futurity in the 'after-life' and

that the present moment is thereby is eclipsed.[17]

Arendt's definition of the relationship between past and future is useful for our understanding of David Lloyd's reading of 'Easter 1916', where he argues for an ambivalence existing at the heart of Yeats's 'national literature' which lies in the ambiguity of the poet's relationship to tradition; a word which implies a continuity between past and future. Lloyd demonstrates how this continuity is disrupted and the role of the poet is questionable. He notices a tension in Yeats's poem:

> The tension subsists metaphorically between the symbolic 'stone' and the continuing 'living stream' that it troubles; the question posed is the relation between the singular moment in which the nation is founded or constituted and the future history of the citizens it brings into being. Yeats represents the relationship as one of trouble and of anxious, obsessive rememoration.

Lloyd concludes that far from offering 'aesthetic reconciliation', Yeats's poetry writes a rupture 'that threatened to displace him'.[18]

In Nation and Narration (1990), Homi Bhabha argues that in national discourse 'meanings may be impartial' and "history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the images of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image".[19] When representing a nation, there is profound ambivalence over whether the image corresponds with or overwhelms the supposed national reality that due to colonialism has been weakened. Lloyd recognizes the complexity of Yeats's conception of a national tradition and deconstructs 'Easter 1916' to tease out the ambiguities. 'Easter 1916' questions the ability of the poet to create a nation and write a national politics, and the desirability of such a project in view of a violent and volatile national situation. Lloyd explains this self-consciousness further: 'The national artist not only deploys symbols, but is a symbol, participating organically in

what he represents, that is, the spirit of the nation-yet-to-be'.[20] 'Easter 1916' is a

poem that explores the ability of the poet to represent a national identity against the

structures of the epistemic violence of colonialism which has rendered national

identity so fragile. The poem demonstrates the difficulties for a country which has

suffered a colonial presence and culture to construct a national identity without

reiterating similar structures of oppression already found in the stereotypes of

colonial or racist representation. In response to this debate, Seamus Deane writes:

> Nationalism had certainly helped to create a new idea of Ireland, which had great
> and liberating consequences. But it also created a version of Irishness ... which was
> restricting and as subject to caricature as the old colonialism had been. This was not
> surprising since the nationalism was a response to colonialism and since it had been
> led by the Anglo-Irish, the colonials themselves.[21]

Hence, Yeats's great national literature represents the old structures of oppression

against which it is supposed to fight.

In his analysis of Seamus Heaney in 'Pap for the Dispossessed' (1993), Lloyd

presents an argument that, when read in the light of his chapter on Yeats, 'The

Poetic of Politics', is not as logical as it at first appears. In 'Pap for the

Dispossessed', Lloyd presents Heaney's poetry as being 'atavistic', whereby the

poet delves into the past in order to make the future 'racy of the soil'. In this way,

implies Lloyd, Heaney's poetry is comparable with that of the Irish Literary

Revivalists, a group in which Yeats is usually included, who identified the writer

with the 'spirit of the nation' and, says Lloyd, reterritorialized language and culture,

uncritically replaying 'the Romantic schema of a return to origins which restores

continuity through fuller self-possession, and accordingly rehearses the

compensations conducted by Irish Romantic nationalism'.[22] However, as we have

seen in Lloyd's analysis of 'Easter 1916', Yeats's poem calls into question

unproblematic readings of the poet as a nationalist curator of lost origins and

demonstrates a relationship to tradition that is far from straightforward. Yet Lloyd's

argument in 'Pap for the Dispossed' implies that Heaney is Yeatsian in his

'Romantic' preoccupation with the past. Surely Lloyd's criticism of Heaney cannot

claim that Heaney's poetry unproblematically delves for a lost national

consciousness when his later chapter on Yeats problematizes such delvings, and

notices how Yeats's poetry runs out of the poet's control only to provide an

ambivalent writing of the national consciousness that the Revivalists sought to build.

Here, there is an apparent inconsistency in what at first appears to be a thoroughly

persuasive argument undertaken by Lloyd.

The following discussion of Heaney's poetry, outlines Lloyd's essay, 'Pap for the

Dispossessed', in order to argue against it so as to get to a reading of Heaney that

dwells on the deterritorializing rather than reterritorializing aspects of his work.

This will lead to the conclusion that it is no longer feasible to situate Heaney within

a Revivalist and Yeatsian Romanticism, and that his poetry from 1984 onwards

marks a transitional point which demands that we reread Heaney's earlier poetry

such as 'The Tollund Man' in a different light provided by the anti-foundational

aspects of 'Tollund' from The Spirit Level. This will lead to exploration of the

inauthentic aspects of Heaney's representation of identity as he takes flight from the

continuities between past and future that are provided by tradition, and which is far

from the pathos for lost origins imagined by Lloyd. Reading Heaney's poetry, the

following discussion will tease out the ambiguities of the poetry in relation to

identity and tradition in the way that Lloyd has done in his chapter on Yeats,

although he has failed to do this in his earlier discussion of Heaney.

The Place of Heaney

Heaney writes:

> Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory constructed an imagined place that gave eternal life
> to Gaelic country people of the West and their Anglo-Irish lords and ladies ... the
> Revivalists, in their different ways, prepared cultural paths for the political fact of
> Irish independence ... The Irish Free State was from the start coterminous as a
> demographic and geographic entity with the textual Ireland of Joyce and the
> Revivalists - the Ireland, that is, of urban Catholicism and rural peasantry and those
> of the Protestant ascendancy and professional classes who were prepared to stay on
> after the Union Jack came down.[23]

The Southern context of Independence contrasts with the Northern context where the

Union Jack has not come down. Heaney writes from a place very different from that

of Yeats and the Revivalists. Yet early on in 'The Sense of Place' (1980) Heaney

imagines that it is to 'the stable element, the land itself, that we must look for

continuity'.[24] Here, Heaney views the land as a stable and historical element that

offers a connection between past and present. Heaney's stance in his essay is

different from Yeats's Revivalist position since he writes from the North, as a

Catholic in a different period of time. However, here, Heaney does return to the soil

and the historical victims who are buried within it.

Hence, David Lloyd takes the easy example of Heaney's well-known early poem

'Digging' (1966) as representative of an entire oeuvre to argue that the poetry

presents an 'unproblematic continuous origin', a 'return to roots that are rural,

Catholic and Gaelic'.[25] Lloyd begins his discussion of 'Digging' arguing that

... Heaney makes much play, both in his poems and in his prose writings, with the deterritorialization inflicted both on a national consciousness by the effects of colonization, and on the individual subject by acculturation. But in Heaney's writing such perceptions initiate no firm holding to and exploration of the quality of dipossession; rather, his work relocates an individual and racial identity through the reterritorialization of language and culture.[26]

Later, Lloyd states that

'Digging' holds out the prospect of a return to origins and the consolatory myth of a knowledge which is innocent and without disrupting effect. The gesture is almost entirely formal, much as the ideology of nineteenth-century nationalists – whose concerns Heaney largely shares – was formal or aesthetic, composing identity of the subject in the knowing of objects the very knowing of which is an act of self-production.[27]

Lloyd's discussion of 'Digging' is persuasive and perceptive yet this chapter

disagrees with his argument that the nation is something constant, given and located

beneath the colonial which is <u>unproblematically</u> presented in all of Heaney's poetry.

Moreover, there is a tension between Heaney's professed poetic project in early

essays such as 'The Sense of Place' and the effects of his poetry. In his early prose,

Heaney may appear to set himself up as a 'curator of a lost organic culture' but the

effects of his poetry, when viewed apart from his posturing, are not simply

'residual'.[28] Heaney's early poems do not <u>naively</u> tap the roots of the Irish/Danish

soil for an untouched national consciousness. Rather, the effect of the poems is to

investigate what digging the land for identity might mean.

Thomas Docherty notices a tension within Irish poetry by both Yeats and Heaney

between

That modernist impetus to reduce alterity to sameness (its 'Anglo'- impulse; its search for archaeological roots) on the one hand; and, on the other, the postmodern impetus to flee the land and to flee 'culture' as such (the 'Irish' search for a different hearing, for a new epistemology, a new mode of inhabiting it). This opposition is that between culture or tradition on the one hand and flight or history on the other.[29]

For the purposes of the rest of this chapter, it is useful to understand Docherty's use of 'modernist' in terms of 'post-colonial nationalism', and his use of 'postmodernist' in terms of 'post-colonial post-nationalism'. In his debate, Docherty discusses the impetus towards flight found in Yeats's Byzantium poems in order to provide an understanding of Yeats that does not situate his writing purely in terms of a modernist interest in archaeology.

Moreover, following his problematization of Yeats's work in relation to tradition, Docherty rereads Heaney's 'Digging' to argue that 'although Heaney still dabbles with the earth and with digging, the text stages the defeat of his strategy of attempting to root himself in a tradition'. How far Heaney's strategy has been simply to 'root himself in a tradition' is unclear since the intentions of Heaney's essays are ever fluctuating. What is interesting here is how Docherty claims that Part 1 of the collection stages the defeat of Antaeus in the poem 'Hercules and Antaeus' (1975), where the poetry finally frees itself from the Georgic commitment to the earth.[30] Bearing in mind this example, although less apparent in his earlier poetry, deterritorialization has been haunting Heaney's poetry before the introduction of the bird man Sweeney into Station Island, when in 'Hercules and Antaeus' strength comes from being unrooted. According to Docherty, the continuity provided by 'a tradition' has fallen apart. To refer back to Arendt's terms, this means that the linkage between past and future can no longer hold or be justified with the effect that the poetry writes of a dispossession that provides a more historical rather than traditional sense of the moment. Things fall apart as there is no legitimate centre or authentic origin that can suture the rupture left by colonialism.

In relation to the following poems, the argument is that the condition of colonial violence is what brings about the symptoms or metaphors of unrootedness, rupture, dispossession and deterritorialization in Heaney's poetry.

For example, the impulse to return to one's roots is questioned rather than endorsed in Heaney's poem 'The Tollund Man' (1972). Lloyd explains how in this poem the poet takes on the role of an archaeologist who digs for missing origins. However, the poem reinscribes the ideological violence an attention to origins might impose and alludes to the mythological aspects of such a reinscription. In this way, continuity between identity and ground is not restored but disrupted. The speaker oscillates between using the 'sad freedom' of the Tollund man as a symbol of resistance, whilst hinting at the negative quality of the corpse as a symbol of blood sacrifice. In part two the speaker recalls the layers of dead residing in a universal bog which exists from the Tollund man at Aarhus, to the 'scattered, ambushed/ Flesh of labourers', '[t]ell-tale skin and teeth' '[o]f four young brothers', dragged along railway sleepers by Protestant paramilitaries, and part of Heaney's own local history. In this world-wide crypt of preserved victims, the setting of Jutland serves as an analogy for Ireland. The speaker poignantly ends the poem:

> Out there in Jutland
> In the old man-killing parishes
> I will feel lost
> Unhappy and at home.[31]

Ritual killing is 'old', part of history, inscribed on the consciousness of the community and yet not confined to the Irish context alone.

The Northern Irish critic Ciaran Carson has attacked Heaney for perpetuating myths of violence.[32] True to a school of criticism that seeks to detect the intentions

of the poet rather than examine the effects of the poetry, Edna Longley also seizes

the opportunity to accuse Heaney of politicizing his art. She attacks his image of the

Tollund man as a 'Catholic' symbol of ritual or as a 'Christ-surrogate, whose death

and bizarre resurrection might redeem, or symbolize redemption for Catholic victims

of sectarian murder'.[33] However, what 'The Tollund Man' critiques is the

inescapability of politics and myth, and the disastrous hold that both have within a

community. The Tollund man is murdered as part of a fertility rite in the belief that

in order for spring to reoccur, one man must be sacrificed. This cyclical version of

death followed by redemption is not far from the biblical story of Christ or Yeats's

Irish nationalist attention to the tale of Cathleen Ní Houlihan who summons young

men to fight for her so that their blood will fertilize the ground of Ireland and make

it forever green. The latter story has been drawn on not only by Yeats but by Patrick

Pearse, and Joseph Plunkett provoking the following comments from Carson who

refers to "the intensive pressure on Heaney ... to be more Irish, to be more political,

to 'try to touch the people', to do Yeats's job again instead of his own".[34]

Yet rather than creating a nationalist myth anew, 'The Tollund Man' raises the

issue of how tradition and communal myths 'try to touch' or ground 'the people'.

The speaker suggests:

> I could risk blasphemy
> Consecrate the cauldron bog
> Our holy ground and pray
> Him to make germinate
>
> The scattered, ambushed
> Flesh of labourers,

As a Catholic speaker, the poet would risk 'blasphemy' by praying to the 'cauldron bog' in an act of Pagan rather than Catholic belief.

In spite of this being 'blasphemy' in the eyes of the Catholic Church, the ancient Pagan or Druid rituals with their attention to communal 'holy ground', the blood sacrifice of one man who brings forth renewal, are not so far from the doctrines of modern day Christianity and Irish nationalism. If the lines are read with attention to the speaker's conditional tense, the result is a poem that carefully questions the legitimacy of age-old mythologies. Fear of 'blasphemy' or uttering impious remarks against the dominant myth is shown to be part of an ideological structure which attempts to control the cry of the iconoclast. The lines alert us to the Pagan aspects of Heaney's poem since as he risks blasphemy in praying to the cauldron bog, he turns to the 'pagus' or 'pays', that which is outside the civic centre, and towards a marginal position. It is worth remembering the anti-foundational aspects of Paganism, the plurality as opposed to monotheology that motivated Pagan religions. Blasphemy or 'blasphemare' in its ecclesiastical and Latinate sense also means to reproach, revile or to speak badly; it is taking the Lord's name in vain. For the poet, bad language is anathema. Heaney's risk of blasphemy risks excommunication from the ground on which he stands as a Catholic and as a poet which is evocative of Sweeney who was excommunicated by the clergy and forced to live in exile away from his 'pagus', 'pays' or locale.

'The Tollund Man' connects the violence of colonial imposition, sectarian murder, religious attention to blood sacrifice and nationalist preoccupation with what Longley would call 'Christ-surrogates'. While linking these different authorities, the

effect of the poem is to hold-up for examination diverse representational systems and it becomes a working example of the way in which colonial, religious and nationalist myths overlap helping to sanction acts of violence. If the poem is understood in this way, then by implication, it questions acts of representation including the reading of - or how I/you/we choose to represent - the poem itself. The poem brings attention to the mechanics of representation 'within' and 'outside' of the text while calling into question this very division, and the potential for different readerships. Rather than supporting a pathos for sacred origins, the poem provides for readers a critique of the authority and violence implicit within 'authentic' versions of culture and history.

It is not only the British army officer with his 'sten-gun' who is seen to exert a crippling influence over the colonial subject. In 'The Tollund Man' nationalism and religion are presented as constricting, and not so very different from colonialism in their tendency to mythologize. Both colonialism and nationalism provide narratives of the past whereby identity becomes consensus based, imaginatively forged and in Jacques Derrida's terms, a 'metaphysics of presence'. Discussing nationalism and nativism in India, Tejaswini Niranjana draws on Frantz Fanon, noticing how the nativist intellectual attempts to discover a counter-history of a "wonderful past" which will provide the basis for a post-colonial national culture. In doing this, 'nationalist discourses converge in an acceptance of the paradigms of representation provided by the colonizing culture'.[35]

Heaney's early poetry may dig for original sources yet his digging is self-conscious and the past he evokes is hardly wonderful. In a 1967 review entitled

'Irish Eyes', Heaney notices that '[t]o make a book ... about any place is to re-create

it; to mythologise or distort; to interpret or mistake'.[36] Since the act of

representation is taken as given or natural, then counter-narratives to the colonial

narrative, even in their marked antithesis follow structures of representation and

oppression provided by colonialism. A strategy of resistance lies not in claiming

that the other narrative is incorrect and producing a new originary narrative, but in

critiquing the legitimacy of myth-making. This is one of the problems initiated in

'The Tollund Man' which is developed by Heaney in his later poetry from Station

Island onwards as, using the figure of Mad Sweeney, he takes flight from authentic

roots and endings. In Docherty's words, the poetry goes 'critical, differential,

historical rather than antiquarian'.[37] For the poetry to be critically historical and

move towards the present moment, it must attempt to free itself from the temptations

of the curator who catalogues a museum culture or the archaelogist who provides us

with a narrative sealed in a time capsule.

Frontiers of Writing

At the end of the sequence 'Station Island', the figure of James Joyce appears and

stretches a hand out from the jetty to lift the pilgrim-poet back on land. Joyce takes

an iconoclastic stance appealing to the poet in his work to break free from the land

> ... to swim
>
>> out on your own and fill the element
>> with signatures on your own frequency,
>> echo soundings, searches, probes, allurements,

elver-gleams in the dark of the whole sea.[38]

In his poem 'Oysters' from <u>Field Work</u> (1979), Heaney has associated the sea with poetic light and the imagination. As Neil Corcoran notes: "It is the light 'like poetry', leaning in temptingly, invitingly, a poetry of the sea, not the land, transcending the diminishments of human history: poetry as alternative, as delight and consolation, as the free play of imagination".[39] In 'Ocean's Love To Ireland' (1975), the sea is the place from which the colonizers come. But sea images can offer escape, freedom, transformation or a way out from the groundings and gravities on land.

However, as Darcy O'Brien indicates, reading <u>Wintering Out</u> and <u>North</u> it is difficult to imagine Heaney taking Joyce's advice and diving into uncharted waters since his place is on land 'as the uncertain narrator of his earth-nurtured preoccupations, experiences, delvings'.[40] This would be true of the 'uncertain narrator' in <u>North</u>. But in <u>Station Island</u>, written a decade later, Heaney reinscribes the myth of Sweeney the bird man who takes flight from the ground of Ulster and lives in the trees. As Robert Trac y explains in his essay 'Into An Irish Free State: Heaney, Sweeney and Clearing Away' (1995):

> Sweeney interferes with St. Ronan, and the Saint curses him: in the midst of battle Sweeney will become terrified and flee, will become a kind of birdman living in the trees, moving restlessly all over Ireland, cold, hungry, and exiled from the comforting and familiar. But, though the Saint does not say so, song goes with birdhood. Sweeney becomes a poet, eloquently celebrating his own exile and unease.[41]

Tracey notices how the figure of Sweeney from Heaney's translation of the Middle Irish poem sequence <u>Buile Suibhne</u> (The Madness, or Frenzy of Sweeney), signals a major change in his work. The sequence took ten years for Heaney to translate and

was taken up shortly after his move South to the Irish Republic in 1972. Eventually

published in 1983, as Sweeney Astray, the sequence introduces Heaney's later

poetic themes of flight, unhomeliness or exile, divided consciousness and providing

clearances away from the sectarian ground of Ulster. Forever in transit, Sweeney

takes lines of flight away from familiar territory.

Hence, Joyce's advice at the end of part two of Station Island to '[l]et go, let fly,

forget' is taken on board by the drifting poet in part three with the poem 'Sweeney

Redivivus', where Heaney reinscribes the story of the mythological bird man exiled

from Ulster after a run in with the local clergy. This is not a letting go of myth as

the poet transforms himself into Mad Sweeney, but as Neil Corcoran notices, it is an

attempt to go beyond the recognized and the known.[42] Heaney explains in Sweeney

Astray that 'Sweeney is ... the artist, displaced, guilty, assuaging himself by his

utterance, it is possible to read the work as an aspect of the quarrel between the free

creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political, and domestic

obligation'.[43] The poetic consciousness is divided and exiled or torn between

different influences.

In an interview with Seamus Deane, Heaney develops the issue of divided

consciousness:

> In this Sweeney story we have a Northern sacral king, Sweeney, who is driven out
> of Rasharkin in Co. Antrim. There is a lot of schizophrenia in him. On the one
> hand he is always whinging for his days in Rasharkin, but on the other he is
> celebrating his free creative imagination.[44]

In a moment of self-revelation, 'Sweeney Redivivus' exclaims: 'And there I was,

incredible to myself,/ among people far too eager to believe me/ and my story, even

if it happened to be true'.[45] Taking to the air it seems that Sweeney/Heaney is

'beginning/to unwind' as the myth of Sweeney is revived and used in a process of self-discovery. The figures of Simon Sweeney, King of the Ditchbacks, and 'Sweeney Redivivus' take on the problem of how, in schizophrenia, to find a more balanced identity for oneself.[46]

As Neil Corcoran notices, Sweeney's journey transforms the places of Ireland which are 'translated' 'into their modern equivalents', in the hope 'that gradually the Northern Unionist or Protestant readership might, in some miniscule way feel able to identify with the Gaelic tradition'.[47] Richard Kearney compares Heaney with Brian Friel, noting how his poetry, like Friel's plays, must negotiate, translate or transgress the sectarian boundaries existing in Ulster.[48] Kearney examines the split selves represented by Sweeney (the displaced and wandering king), Terminus (the god of boundaries) and Janus (the double-faced god who looks simultaneously backward to the myths of indigenous culture and forward to the horizons of the future). It is therefore apt when Heaney's poetry is defined as 'journey work' or a migrant preoccupation with threshold and transit, passage and pilgrimage, with the crossing over of frontiers, gazing at the past while being catapulted into the future.[49]

Such a concern with frontiers and their transgression is demonstrated in Heaney's critical essay 'Frontiers of Writing' which was given in 1995 as part of his Oxford Lectures and published in The Redress of Poetry. Here, Heaney describes how the result of Partition is the creation of a state that, depending on where one stands, is named Northern Ireland or the North of Ireland, and in this way, exists between two worlds being 'Britain's Ireland' and 'Ireland's Ireland'.[50] He comments how the 'whole population are adepts in the mystery of living in two places at one time'.

Heaney's essay looks to an 'elsewhere beyond the frontier of writing' where in Wallace Stevens's words, "the imagination presses back against the pressure of reality". Explaining that he 'wanted to suggest that poetry represented a principle of integration within such a context of division', Heaney shies from stating this in anything but a past and conditional tense because such a statement 'seemed unduly loaded with political promise'. Heaney argues that to go 'above the brim' or beyond the conventional bounds of representation provides a 'redress of poetry' which, in George Seferis's words, is a poetry that is 'strong enough to help'. The challenge then is a 'bi-focal' perspective, 'to be in two minds' or to 'reconcile two orders of knowledge'.[51]

These intentions are hinted at in the poem 'Terminus' from The Haw Lantern (1987) where Heaney imagines himself as a pair of human scales, a human spirit level or balancer:

> Two buckets were easier carried than one.
> I grew up in between.
>
> My left hand placed the standard iron weight.
> My right tilted a last grain in the balance.[52]

The image here is comparable with the scales of justice whereby the poet becomes a cultural judge who weighs up extremes. The position of cultural judge is not an easy one and the yoke of it falls heavily upon the shoulders of the poetic speaker, who finds that two buckets are easier to carry than one since they enable him to keep his balance. Considering this image, it is no wonder that Heaney's moderate 'lessons in verse' create an amount of resentment from critics such as John Redmond who names the poet 'scribe, seer and teacher', and remains suspicious of Heaney's 'good

advice' and lecturing techniques.[53] However, as will be argued in relation to the

following poems, unlike the good intentions of Heaney's critical essays, his poetry

provides no such easy advice; instead, the poems shift uneasily on uncomfortable

ground.

Heaney/Sweeney's acts of deterritorialization can be read in terms of cultural

decolonization since he questions the geographic, historic, ideological and linguistic

spaces occupied by himself, his audience and the occupants of Ulster. For example,

at the end of 'Station Island' the poet takes the hand of Joyce and, '[l]ike a

convalescent', '[i]t was as if I had stepped free into space/ alone with nothing that I

had not known/ already'.[54] Stepping into 'free space', the poet experiences his first

flight from the Irish landscape at the end of 'Station Island'. Yet in the sectarian

context of Belfast, free space is hard to find since territory is often patrolled and

controlled in intimidating ways. Returning from the island to the mainland of

Ireland with a fresher vision, the poet is not unaware of the 'battlefields' or

attachments, but is more confident about the possibility for imaginative flight out of

a torn community. This could be read as necessary escapism or self-preservation

rather than as decolonization which would seek to free the land from colonial

violence. However, Heaney's imagery of free space connects with the nationalist

political ideal of free territory or a United Ireland. As the critic Neil Corcoran's

revised study of Heaney in 1998 notices:

> The crossing of the frontier of writing, which is a crossing into the space made
> accessible by generous imagination, a space crossed over into – 'transgressed', it
> may be – from social and political constriction, is proleptic of the better political
> reality at least conceivable in Northern Ireland. The literal frontier here is the Irish
> border, 'a frontier which has entered the imagination definitely', but which may
> nevertheless be erased by the act of writing … the ultimate condition to be

outstripped by this poetic imagination is the condition of fracture represented by the Irish border.[55]

This, then, is a post-colonial redress of poetry that attempts to transgress Partition at a literary and symbolic level.

Moreover, the idea of deconstructing the dominant language in an attempt to create a more liberated imaginative space for oneself implicitly questions the adequacy of the identity politics already in place in Ireland. Refusing containment, the poet as bird-king can be imagined drifting or coasting in a quick silver world of air and water, refusing the limits, boundaries, lines, lie or lies of the land. From Station Island, Heaney's poems take flight paths out of Ireland, and his concern is with migration and displacement as opposed to digging for an authentic past.[56] The southern Irish philosopher, Richard Kearney, argues that Heaney's 'journey work' is nowhere more evident than in his relentless probings of the hidden ambiguities and duplicities which enseam the very language in which he writes. This portrait is of Heaney as a deconstructive master who tests language and its ideologies to the limits. Comparably, in an essay entitled 'Heaney Among the Deconstructionists' (1990), Henry Hart's deconstructive reading finds that the poetic method in Heaney's Sweeney poems is like a 'linguistic map or a deconstructive journey': 'As Heaney's poems rearrange archaic systems of privilege and distinction, of centrality and marginality ... they continue to reflect on the way displacements and differences make it possible for language to have meaning'.[57] Heaney as author of Sweeney Astray therefore becomes the deconstructionist 'marks-man' who translates 'a dead language into a living one, reviving ghostly absences with living presences', his

'arrow-pen' the 'magic marker' which highlights the sign as a structure of differences' rather than finding 'a presence or an absence'.[58]

Using the examples of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, Hart also draws on Terry Eagleton's review of Richard Kearney's work where he argues that in Ireland, deconstruction comes with the territory:

> ... that post-structuralism should strike a responsive resonance in a post-colonial [and here we could add colonial] society is really not at all surprising: it is not irrelevant that the founder of deconstruction grew-up as an Algerian colonial ... The fracturing of identity, the hankerings of desire, the clash of cultural codes, the collapse of triumphalist teleologies: all of these are motifs to which the experience of subcultures on the post-colonial peripheries is likely to prove more hospitable than the doctrinal assurances of the metropolitan centers.[59]

Here, Ireland is positioned as a 'post-colonial society', and connections are made between post-structuralism and 'the collapse of triumphalist teleologies such as imperialism'. In this way, deconstructive and deterritorializing visions become both a symptom of and an antidote to the epistemic violence of colonialism.

With reference to deconstruction and deterritorialization, the post-colonial critic, Stuart Hall, investigates the formation of identity. He explains how a nostalgia for origins, a 'true' identity or self-expression tends to be located in the Imaginary; that is, a cosy prenatal realm which exists before entrance into language and is free from the terrors of signification. However, rather than arguing that identity is found in a realm before birth, Hall explains how the Imaginary exists after birth and constitutes identity:

> ... identifications belong to the imaginary ... they unsettle the I; they are the sedimentation of the 'we' in the constitution of any I, the structuring present of alterity in the very formation of the I. Identifications are never fully and finally made, they are incessantly reconstituted ... consolidated, retrenched, contested, on occasion, compelled to give way.[60]

The alterity of a sea-like pre-natal realm can be viewed as a metaphor for the instability of identity and linguistic representation which are 'constantly retrenched' on land. When Joyce implores the pilgrim-poet to swim out on his own, he is asking him to move away from the impulse to retrench and instead, to float in a world of water and air; an imaginary space where the rootedness of identity is called into question. As Heaney mentions in his essay on Patrick Kavanagh in The Government of the Tongue (1988):

> ... it is not so much a matter of attaching oneself to a living symbol of being rooted in the native ground; it was more a matter of preparing to be unrooted, to be spirited away into some transparent, yet indigenous afterlife. The new place was all idea, if you like; it was generated out of my experience of the old place but it was not a topographical location. It was and remains an imagined realm, even if it can be located at an earthly spot, a placeless heaven rather than a heavenly place.[61]

The phrase, 'transparent yet indigenous afterlife' betrays the contradictions in Heaney's poetic theories and indicates the way in which he is torn between an indigenous rootedness and the 'afterlife' or transparency of a 'placeless heaven'.

Heaney's poem 'The First Flight' (1984) tests the force of gravity as Sweeney prefers to strip away stringencies: 'to fend off the onslaught of winds/ I would welcome and climb/ at the top of my bent'. Sweeney who might be tempted to 'hold on to' 'The Old Icons' (1984) also masters the air.[62] Heaney's bog poems and Corkery's notion of Irish consciousness as a quaking sod, where stability underfoot is uncertain, take on further dimensions: the island of Ireland, linguistic structures of representation and claims for a firmly anchored poetic self, end-up being constantly infiltrated by waves of alterity. An answer to the question of whether Sweeney can take flight from colonial violence in a landscape that becomes a crypt for the Tollund Man is to say, in the first place, that the landscape is never that

firmly grounded. In this way, frontier lines are less limiting; to follow the lines of

language would be to chart routes that are ever shifting with the potential to travel

both anywhere and nowhere. Although identity may be articulated through

linguistic representation, it is less convincing to imagine that this linguistic model of

crossing boundaries can be used to change a sectarian context where frontier lines

are heavily marked and policed. In Heaney's work there is a tension between lived

politics, literary theory and writing which provides a context for political change.

The poems move between ground, water and air which brings to mind (perhaps in a

Muldoonian way) the bubble of the spirit level which airily and yet gravity bound,

measures the balance of gradients. Heaney's spirit level-like poems oscillate

between a gravitation pull, airy imaginative flight and the need for balance between

opposing extremes.[63]

Making Strange

This negotiation between the opposing forces of differing identities is typified in

another poem from Station Island entitled 'Making Strange' which attempts to chart

a middle ground. The poem is an example of the attempt to transform linguistic

divisions into a hybrid 'middle voice' of mixed diction that allows for contradictory

cultural messages to coexist. The speaker in the poem adopts the role of cultural

translator:

> I stood between them,
> the one with his travelled intelligence
> and tawny containment,
> his speech like the twang of a bowstring,

and another, unshorn and bewildered
in the tubs of his wellingtons,
smiling at me for help,
faced with this stranger I'd brought   him.[64]

There are cultural, linguistic and class differences between these two people.

However, with the 'cunning middle voice' urging the speaker to be both 'adept'

and 'dialect', the translator refuses to take the side of either person but to 'love the

cut of this travelled one' and yet the countryside of 'sweetbriar after the rain' which

is the home of the local man. In this way, the poetic speaker courageously becomes

the middle-man who 'reciting my pride/ in all that I knew', begins 'to make strange'

what is known 'at the same recitation'. Allegiances to either the local or the

cosmopolitan are shown to be a matter of perspective. However, the speaker's

position as middle man is uncomfortable as he and we are presented on the one hand

with the vulnerability of the 'unshorn' person 'in the tubs of his wellingtons' who,

well-intentioned, smiles at the speaker 'for help'. On the other hand, there is the self

confident 'containment' and implicit smugness of 'the one with his travelled

intelligence', and 'speech like the twang of a bowstring'. This evokes both images

of the archer's bow and the string of a musical instrument, to suggest how speech

can be used as a high cultured weapon and implying the class power carried by a

refined accent.

Another voice, an inner 'middle voice', advises the speaker to be 'bold', imploring

him to 'love the cut of this travelled one' and '[g]o beyond what's reliable'. The

imperatives and repetitive incantatory phrases in stanza five are written as if to give

strength to the speaker in an embarassing social situation where worlds he has kept

separate suddenly collide:

> Go beyond what's reliable
> in all that keeps pleading and pleading,
> these eyes and puddles and stones,
> and recollect how bold you were

However, the speaker has made 'departures' from the place that he 'cannot go back on', and so he must be 'adept', (an adjective turned into the noun of 'adepts' in Heaney's lecture 'Frontiers of Writing' delivered in Oxford), and adapt as he articulates a bridge between himself, the stranger with his 'travelled intelligence' and the 'unshorn one', who is so far removed from the stranger as to be mute and 'smiling' like a person in need of a translator.[65] By adopting the middle voice between the local and standardized, the poet begins, in a Brechtian way, to 'make strange' what has been taken for granted.

Here it is worth bearing in mind Heaney's background, and the way in which he, like Seamus Deane, was part of the first generation of children in the North to profit from a better education than their parents who were from farming backgrounds. The speaker in 'Making Strange' becomes as chameleon-like as the son in 'Clearances' from The Haw Lantern (1987), who is adept and adapts to his mother's way of speaking:

> ... I governed my tongue
> In front of her, a genuinely well-
> adjusted adequate betrayal
> Of what I knew better. I'd naw and aye
> And decently relapse into the wrong
> Grammar which kept us allied and at bay.[66]

The only way to relate to the mother is on her own terms which is no real relation or conversation in the Latin sense of conversari, 'to keep company with'. It is rather a conversation that remains converse as the son pretends to be converted or 'well-

adjusted' simply in order to keep them 'at bay' from one another. The 'decent' and 'adequate' bridge he builds between them is a 'betrayal' that keeps them apart rather than in company. In this way, the speaker becomes a traitor within his own class but at the same time, he cannot change back and erase his education which has made him estranged from his original 'wrong grammar'.

In this situation where two worlds crash together, the speaker can only be 'cunning' and the poem cunningly attempts to deflect attention from the gap between the two people by turning their and our attention to the landscape which becomes the centre of interest as the poem tries to smooth over the difference between the characters. The term différend comes to mind as a stronger way of expressing the difference or irreconcilable rift that exists between the people in the poem. In Jean François Lyotard's Le Différend (1983), the paradigm for a différend is a case in which two parties in dispute cannot articulate their cause in the same idiom.[67] The two parties in the différend do not speak the same language; they are two irreconcilables who cannot form a genuine and successful bridge or third space between themselves. In Heaney's poem the optimistic speaker attempts to be 'bold' in the face of a cultural rift and turns to the landscape for healing. Yet the territory bears testimony to a cultural rift between Ireland's Ireland and 'Britain's Ireland'. The speaker's perspective of the landscape becomes discontinuous and 'strange', and the final feeling is of an attempt at poetic bravado, a 'recitation' or incantation that results in radical estrangement between the people described, and between the speaker and the land to which he looks for healing. Any attempt at balance or

reconciliation is demonstrated as being far more precarious than critics such as

Redmond care to acknowledge.

The title 'Making Strange' relates to the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky's

theories regarding ostranenie or 'defamiliarization'. Shklovsky was committed to

the study of avant-garde literature and art. With his concept of 'defamiliarization',

he argued for a distinction between poetic and prosaic language, and claimed against

Symbolist Russian writers such as Potebnya, that poets are more concerned with

arranging images than creating them. Shklovsky believed that it was the duty of the

poet to startle us into 'a new way of seeing' that would also be 'a new way of

saying'. Using the example of Tolstoy, he claimed that 'defamiliarization' allows us

to appreciate the novelty of new ways of seeing 'against what is habitual and

expected in any given context'. In Shklovsky's words:

> The purpose of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to
> increase difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an
> aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the
> artfulness of an object; the object is not important.

'Defamiliarization' questions established ways of seeing and thus has an implicitly

political agenda which may have been what brought it into conflict with the official

ideology of post-Revolutionary Russia and led the exponents of Russian Formalism

to be suppressed by Stalin, silenced of forced into exile.

Shklovsky goes back to Aristotle:

> According to Aristotle, poetic language must appear strange and wonderful; and, in
> fact, it is often actually foreign: the Sumerian used by the Assyrians, the Latin of
> Europe during the Middle Ages ... the obscure style of the language of Arnaut
> Daniel with the 'roughened' ... forms which make pronunciation difficult - these are
> used in much the same way.[68]

Comparably, in Heaney's poem the speaker experiences the sense of wonder that is

felt in the act of cultural translation, where the lines of what is familiar and

supposedly strange, can be both defamiliarized and familiarized. The potential

provided by such a transformation is that linguistic, cultural and territorial

boundaries may be shifted and transgressed, at an everyday and poetic level. It is

interesting to notice how at the end of 'Making Strange', the speaker is on another

journey, taking his own route and taking possession of the land, as he is depicted

'driving the stranger/ through my own country'. The emphasis here is on travelling

between and across cultural, linguistic and territorial boundaries, and the

problematization of such a transgression.

Comparisons can be made here between textual and territorial decolonization

which is perhaps best expressed with Heaney's use of the dinnseanchas tradition. As

a major poetic genre in the Gaelic tradition, dinnseanchas poems celebrated

rootedness and knowing one's place through etymological understanding and the

history that goes with it.[69] 'Dinnseanchas' translated from Irish into English means

'topography'. This is a tradition which provides detailed representation of a place

and is connected with map-making or the remapping of certain characteristics of a

place by paying particular attention to the place name. Heaney's earlier poems

'Anahorish', Toome' and 'Broagh' (1972) can initially be read as examples of this

tradition which excavates a hidden indigenous history rather than providing a model

of cultural negotiation between developing histories. However, Andrew Murphy

argues that translating, in the first line of the poem, the title 'Broagh' into

'Riverbank', 'what Heaney creates ... is a kind of common language community that

unites colonizer and native'.[70] Yet the word 'broagh' has a 'gh the strangers found/ difficult to manage'.[71] Murphy concedes that this aspect of pronouncing the word serves simultaneously to unite the divided communities of the North and to set them apart from an English community. For the English reader the 'common language' of 'Broagh' is not so common since it is a language from which s/he is implicitly excluded as a 'stranger' since the gh is as difficult for an English tongue to pronounce as an 'h' is for a French person. The example of 'Broagh' illustrates how Heaney's poems both bring communities together and drive a wedge even deeper between them which is also typified by the effects of 'Making Strange'. The poetry remains undecided: when opposing identities are brought together, they can either form a bridge between one another or the very bridge they attempt to form bears out the radical estrangement between them.

This is demonstrated in a different way in an earlier poem entitled 'The Other Side' from <u>Wintering Out</u>. In his lecture 'Frontiers of Writing', Heaney describes this poem as 'a moment of achieved grace between people with different allegiances' whereby a Presbyterian farmer standing in the yard at night, does not go into his Catholic neighbour's house until he has heard them finish their prayers.[72] Heaney's commentary on 'The Other Side' is more optimistic than the effects of 'Making Strange' as it suggests that 'achieved grace' is possible. According to Heaney, the poem is indicative of the redress of poetry or going beyond sectarianism into political reconciliation. This poem about the relationship between neighbours is evocative of Robert Frost's poem 'Mending Wall', and Edna Longley sees it as asking whether there can 'be communication, community, even communion founded

on a shared landscape'.[73] Perhaps if the landscape of the North of Ireland was truly

'shared' without one identity attempting to obliterate the other, then there would be

more chance of 'communion', although Longley fails to acknowledge how this is far

from the case when one section of the population have been cast into a minority

status and treated as an underclass. What is interesting in Longley's comment is

when she notices how 'The Other Side' attempts to span two languages to create a

third.

For example, there is the 'tongue of chosen people' which represents the Protestant

farmer and we hear his voice within the poem narrated by the Catholic: 'Your side

of the house, I believe,/ hardly rule by the book at all.' Whereas the Catholic views

the Protestant as having a 'brain' like 'a whitewashed kitchen/ hung with texts,

swept tidy/ as the body o' the kirk'.[74] When the Protestant farmer visits 'after the

litany', he hears 'the rosary' 'dragging/ mournfully on in the kitchen' of his Catholic

neighbours. On the one hand, both views are presented and the narrator recognizes

the differences between neighbours but holds them together within the space of the

poem which forges a double perspective, a third space or passage in between

opposing perspectives which is desired by Heaney the middle man in Oxford. On

the other hand, the poem outlines the rifts between each community, the suspicion

and fascination with which each side views the other, and the symbolic

irreconcilables of two different consciousnesses or cultures: the one with a brain

like a whitewashed kirk, the other mournful over his rosary. Both 'Making Strange'

and 'The Other Side' explore the borderline between races and cultures. Whereas

'Making Strange' introduces a complete foreigner or alien to the Northern territory,

'The Other Side' represents two different races living as neighbours within the same territory. In neither poem is there discovered an easy third space or point of balance in-between contesting identities, although both poems uneasily attempt to transgress the border between them. If the poems were to be measured by Heaney as the human spirit level in 'Terminus', the bubble in the spirit level would find no resting point of balance.

Crossings

Developing concern with poetic transformation, liminal borders and expanding the limits of the known, Heaney comments about Patrick Kavanagh: 'Kavanagh is closer to the tightrope walker than the escape artist'.[75] The liminal figure of Sweeney can be recalled as one who oscillates between the roles of the tightrope walker who balances along a precarious line and the escape artist, who might take a line of flight as a way of moving from the given to something else. The poetic sequence of Sweeney Astray was concerned with the translation of the medieval poem Buile Suibhne into English. In 'The King of the Ditchbacks' the poet writes of Sweeney: 'He was depending on me as I hung out on the limb of a translated phrase like a youngster dared out on to an alder branch over the whirlpool'.[76] Like the tightrope walker, the linguistic translator is balanced precariously out on the limb of the alder branch that may snap and send him falling into the whirlpool below. The act of translation of Irish into English juggles cultural identities and treads a minefield between contesting cultures. Corkery's quaking sod of Irish

consciousness becomes in Heaney's work a quivering alder branch, bending over the depths of a whirlpool.

Andrew Murphy writes that seesawing between realms, refusing a definitive programme and providing 'crossings' between different perspectives is the task of every poet: 'The fundamental point of poetry is not to effect an arrival but to facilitate the possibility of 'crossings' - further interrelation of the world of possibility and materiality'.[77] This relates closely to Heaney's description of Robert Frost's poetry in his essay excluded from The Redress of Poetry entitled 'Above the Brim: On Robert Frost'. It is strange that such an important essay should be excluded from Heaney's publication of the Oxford Lectures since Heaney's reading of Frost can be viewed alongside his own poetry whereby Frost is a prime motivator for the oscillation between what Murphy terms 'the world of possibility and materiality'.

Heaney analyzes Frost's poem 'Birches' from which he takes the phrase 'above the brim' as the title for his lecture. Frost's poem describes a boy's joyful and expert ascent to the top of a slender birch tree which is comparable with Heaney's image of the youngster balancing on the alder branch over the whirlpool.[78] The boy

> always kept his poise
> To the top branches, climbing carefully
> With the same pains you use to fill a cup
> Up to the brim, and even above the brim
> Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
> Kicking his way down through the air to the ground ...

Frost   imagines the boy exceeding himself, going 'above the brim' beyond what can be contained and this metaphor is accompanied by images of flight. Heaney says: 'I'd like to get away from earth awhile/ And then come back to it and begin

over'. Frost's notion of flying away from earth in a moment of excess is not foreign to Heaney. Heaney describes the poem as 'airy vernal daring, an overbriming of invention' and likens it to what Frost called 'supply'. This is 'buoyancy' in the face of gravity. Heaney implies with a sense of occasion, that Frost's poetry has moments where it defies gravity, moving out beyond what is known in an imaginative leap or excess: 'When Frost comes down hard upon the facts of hurt, he still manages to end up gaining poetic altitude. As his intelligence thrusts down, it creates a reactive force capable of carrying the whole burden of our knowledge and experience'.[79] Here, it is unclear whether the 'our' alluded to is part of a rhetorical strategy, (popular perhaps with the Oxford don), as when a person uses a royal 'we' rather than 'I' or, whether Heaney as humanist is alluding to some greater sense of 'Our Universal Human Experience'. Like Corkery, Heaney imagines in his statement a community of 'our knowledge and experience' which contradicts the fact of dividedness and sectarianism that informs his comments elsewhere.[80]

A 'reactive force' against the gravities on land is what motivates the flight into 'what we might call cruising altitude' or 'as Milton called it' "middle flight". Heaney goes further explaining how this is 'a fullness [which] rebounds back upon itself, or it rebounds off someone or something else and thereby creates a wave capable of lifting the burden of our knowledge and the experience to a new, refreshing plane'.[81] This 'refreshing plane' of 'ours' is the middle passage, 'middle flight', a space in-between, a third position or crossing at the edge of representation, that is 'above the brim'.

The image of the spirit level, evoked by the title of Heaney's most recent collection, also provides potential for crossings from the world of materiality to the world of possibility - it is the bridge between. The spirit level is hardly mentioned in the poems themselves. Yet it is a poignant image that haunts the collection as a whole, connecting with the notions of balance that are explored in 'Making Strange' and 'The Other Side'. In his essay 'Culture's In-Between' (1996), Homi Bhahba comments that 'the translation of cultures, whether assimilative or agnostic, is a complex act that generates borderline effects and identifications ...'[82] This is an effect that is initiated in Seeing Things. For instance, Heaney's translation of the Aeneid writes of a crossing between the real world and the underworld, and it instigates a negotiation between languages or between his version of the myth and the myth proper.[83] In this way, translation provides transformation from one story to another; crossing between realms, it is an 'act that generates borderline effects' bringing attention to cultural borders and their possible transgression. As Heaney notices in the conclusion of his essay 'The Impact of Translation' (1988), (which once again draws on a plural pronoun or communal sense of readership), '[w]hen we read the translations of the poets of Russia and Eastern Europe, we are on the very edge ...'[84]

The poem 'Settings' imagines: 'Air and ocean known as antecedents/ Of each other. In opposition with/ Omnipresence, equilibrium, brim'.[85] In Seeing Things Heaney attempts to write on the brim, between 'air and ocean' in the hope of 'equilibrium'. Derrida has described this approach as 'thinking at the limit' or as thinking in the interval; a sort of double writing.[86] To write from the borderline,

refusing either extreme, in an attempt to resituate limits or lines of segregation

cannot be set apart as a purely aesthetic task since this is an important political

stance for a poet from the North of Ireland to adopt. In 'Frontiers of Writing',

Heaney concludes via Roy Foster:

> ... that people can reconcile more than one cultural identity may have much to
> recommend it ... I wanted to affirm that within our individual selves we can
> reconcile two orders of knowledge which we might call the practical and the poetic;
> to affirm also that each form of knowledge redresses the other and that the frontier
> between them is there for the crossing.[87]

As Heaney demonstrates in the final quotation of this essay, such a re-envisioning

or crossing takes place at a representative level in Part Eight of 'Lightenings' which

writes a channel between ordinary and imaginative worlds.

For instance, as the monks at the abbey of Clonmacnoise are at prayer, a ship in

the air appears above them. The anchor of the ship becomes attached to the chapel's

altar rail, and one of the crew climbs down the rope and struggles to release it. The

abbot suggests that the monks must help in order to save the man's life. Murphy

suggests that: 'The quotidian world of the monks constitutes the marvellous for the

sailor of the visionary ship, just as his world in turn, constitutes the marvellous for

the monks themselves'.[88] Interaction between the visionary and ordinary, furthers

the sense of liminality or writing from the line of division while at the same time

questioning the positioning of this line. Of course, this might be the task of every

poet. There could be the objection that <u>Seeing Things</u> simply celebrates: 'Me

waiting until I was nearly fifty/ To credit marvels'.[89] Nevertheless, it is especially

poignant when a poet from a Catholic minority who once lived in sectarian Ulster,

begins to question the limits of representation and boundaries of any kind. Heaney's

challenge to dividing lines, including that between aesthetics and politics, is not

accidental or superfluous and cannot be separated from post-colonial agendas.

Images of sea crossings, journeys, balance and lines resonate throughout Seeing

Things. In the title poem, there is another 'boat/ Sailing through air' connecting the

ethereal with the sea as realms into the marvellous and indefinite. The final image

of 'Markings' is of two men mowing a sea of corn who are imagined rowing 'the

steady earth'. However, the earth is explicitly marked by the lines of a football

pitch, a 'house foundation' and a 'field of grazing'. The speaker observes: 'All

these things entered you/ As if they were both the door and what came through it/

they marked the spot, marked time and held it open'.[90] The lines of language and

territory enter the subject and define her/him. The issue of land markings are crucial

to anti-colonial projects. In the poem the lines are not given but created and subject

to change since 'time' although marked is 'held open'. To write from the dividing

line is to indicate how precarious is such a division. As in 'The First Gloss' it is to

> Take hold of the shaft of the pen.
> Subscribe to the first step taken.
> from a justified line
> into the margin.[91]

The Irish writer plans to transgress the line justified by others but, as is already seen

with the problematic of decolonization, the justified line defines the margin and the

margin defines the justified line. The monks at Clonmacnoise and the crew of the

ship see that the different side of the line may not be separate from them. This

implies that to think of cultures or sides of the line as uncontaminated or self-

contained is misguided. In Seeing Things Heaney's presentation of spaces

imaginative and territorial cannot effectively be cordoned off. This promotes an

anti-sectarian vision of representation that denies the authority of territorial and ideological apartheid.

Mark Patrick Hederman maintains the necessity for Irish poetry to lead the population through a 'psychic hinterland' into a fifth province, an Ireland of the mind where contesting identities come together, an-'other world'.[92] This was one intention of the Field Day group which included both Hederman and Heaney in the 1970s and 80s as it imagined that a resolution for nationhood was to think of it in terms of a state of mind or fifth province which is also acknowledged by the 1998 Settlement where politicians came to the realization that minds must change as well as political realities in Ireland. However, republicans, including some of those involved in Field Day, continue to want Ireland to be a place rather than a state of mind. Field Day's importance lay in the way that it claimed the necessity of aesthetics to imagine something other than what is given in the hope of political, cultural and social change. Hence, poems such as 'Making Strange' and 'The Other Side' attempt to negotiate a point of balance which is alluded to at a metaphorical level by Hederman, and connects the image of the fifth province with the bubble of the spirit-level as a meaningful 'absence' or an in-between space that delicately moves with complex understanding of each extreme.

Although the act of translation translates from an original, to argue that there is no original source, no primordial "presence" that is to be represented, but a dialogue of representations, which bring identities into being, suggests that identity is ever-changing, affected and determined in relation to other identities. This challenges separatism and the domination of one term over another. In The Spirit Level

Heaney translates from the Romanian of Martin Sorescu, rejecting the notion of a

pure source:

> The first words got polluted
> Like the river water in the morning
> Flowing with the dirt
> Of blurbs and the front pages.[93]

As the Irish poet transforms Romanian into English, the translation undermines

notions of linguistic, racial or cultural purity since as with the English corruption of

Irish, even the 'first words got polluted'. In his essay 'The Impact of Translation'

and elsewhere in The Government of the Tongue (1988), Heaney turns to the

Eastern European poet and Polish Catholic exile, Czeslaw Milosz, who experienced

life under martial law and the Russian exile, Osip Mandelstam. In an interview with

Neil Corcoran, Heaney suggests:

> ... there is something in their situation that makes them attractive to a reader whose
> formative experience has largely been Irish. There is an unsettled aspect to the
> different worlds they inhabit, and one of the challenges they face is to survive
> amphibiously, in the realm of 'the times' ...[94]

Joyce's advice to swim out into the deep has been translated by Heaney via the

experiences of Eastern European poets into a need to be 'amphibious', to exist on

land as well as in the water, and neither land nor water provide a pure original

source for identity.

Jacques Derrida has argued for the heterogeneous origin, challenging a

metaphysics of presence which, in racial terms, would overthrow the assumed unity

of colonial representation with its definition of self/Other. The notion of

heterogeneity also undermines territorial arguments such as 'I was here before you',

noticing that identity and racial origins are entangled rather than straightforward.

There is no longer a simple origin. This is exemplified at a biographical level by

Heaney's maternal ancestor, a Protestant who converted to Catholicism. As Neil

Corcoran notices in relation to the poem 'The Other Side', "the 'mother's side' was,

once, 'the other side' too".[95] The dispersed origin has impact for deep-rooted

colonial and nationalist historical narratives: 'The sign of origin, for Derrida, is a

writing of a writing that can only state that the origin is originary translation'.[96] In

this way linguistic translation between cultures offers a theory of destabilization

which critiques itself as a programme of non-originary, originary translation, by

being committed to the perpetual project of translation.[97] Since deconstruction

necessarily inhabits the structures it criticizes, Derrida and Gayatri Spivak call this

"affirmative deconstruction" or the strategic use of essentialist concepts in less

essentializing ways. This offers the possibility of expanding the limits of

representation rather than sticking to them or flying from them.

Thomas Docherty rightly positions postmodern theories alongside post-colonial

theories, when he imagines Heaney seeing 'the unamenable to representation' and

seeing things apart from consensus-based notions of truth.[98] Moving from the

postmodern, Docherty alludes to post-colonial theories when he describes Heaney's

poetic vision as foregrounding a politics of oppression and seeing between or

beyond the lines to a space where there 'lies political hope for those interested in

emancipation from consensus-based notions of truth, from ideology'.[99] Corkery's

notion of the Irish community or collective Irish consciousness is abandoned as

dated, along with ideals of collective demonstration and the ability or desirability of

'the people' to enforce political change. Instead, allegiance to the 'consensus' of an

imagined populace is presented as repressive and equated with the dominating 'ideology'. This is where post-colonial nationalist agendas collide with postmodernist theories which do not allow for the specific political agenda and sense of community that post-colonial nationalism must necessarily express; the traces of which are to be found in Heaney's rhetorical uses of 'we' and 'our'. It is this tension between postmodern dissolution of identity, post-nationalist 'flight paths' taken out of what is known and the post-colonial nationalist desire to hold onto a sense of communal territory, with which Heaney as 'the middle man' struggles.[100]

Interestingly, Docherty also suggests that the 'ground' for Heaney's poetry 'has disappeared, or gone underground'.[101] 'The Irish' are still imagined having no clearly demarcated terrain from which to identify themselves. We have moved a long way from Yeats's image of 'The Rose Tree' where the Irish ground was watered by the blood of her faithful. What Docherty posits in place of the quaking sod as a metaphor for understanding Irish identity is a Deleuzian rhizome. But what kind of politics does this provide and what are the implications for a model of Irish identity going underground?

Deterritorialization

In place of Corkery, Docherty draws attention to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's reading of the rhizome in 'On The Line' and A Thousand Plateaus (1988) to provide a postmodern understanding of Heaney's poetry. However, the rhizome is also taken as a model of deterritorialization by post-colonial studies as typified by the

work of Edouard Glissant.[102] Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the rhizome as a

network of underground plant roots but these are paradoxically unrooted as the

rhizome deterritorializes into differing routes or lines of flight. What is special

about the rhizome is its nomadicity, how it is made of shifting directions and always

on the move. Forever in transit, the rhizome is neither beginning nor end 'but

always in the middle'.[103] The rhizome and the spirit level serve as metaphors that

avoid extremes; always in the middle, they chart a space of balance. At the risk of

pinning down the rhizome, it can be understood as walking in-between, a hybrid

system of interrelating differences, an unsystematic nomadicity which travels

borderlands. Bearing this in mind, the rhizome will be used in relation to Heaney's

recent poem 'Tollund' in order to provide a post-colonial and post-nationalist rather

than a post-colonial nationalist or postmodernist reading of Heaney's recent poetry.

'Tollund' rewrites in September 1994 'The Tollund Man' which was published in

1972. Whereas the earlier poem looks to the roots of the countryside and the

quaking sod of bogland from which the Tollund man is unearthed, the later poem

develops imagery of routes, of travelling through a Danish landscape in a way that is

evocative of 'Making Strange': 'That Sunday morning we had travelled far ...'

across '[a] path through Jutland fields. Light traffic sound'. Visiting the landscape

which is imagined in 'The Tollund Man', the speaker notices how things '[h]ad been

resituated and landscaped,/ With tourist signs in futhark runic script/ In Danish and

in English. Things had moved on'. There are several things going on here: first, the

landscape is resituated and reinscribed by tourist signs written in both Danish and

English, and so the landscape is translated for foreigners from ancient runic letters.

Things move on: there are 'byroads' moving off and the figures in the poem are

'footloose'. In 'Tollund', there is a sense of space and movement that is found less

in the static, close-up and claustrophobic descriptions which charaterize part one of

'The Tollund Man'. Moreover, whereas 'The Tollund Man' is written in the

anticipatory future tense of '[s]omeday I will go', this future space is finally got to

when the speaker arrives in Scandinavia in the present tense of 'Tollund'. Heaney's

poem 'Tollund' carefully records in the present tense the moment of 'September

1994' and rewrites the future imagined past in 'The Tollund Man'.

The end of 'Tollund' connects walking abroad with freedom and finding one's

identity. The feminine endings have the effect of the lines over-spilling themselves

or refusing to be contained. While repetition in the final line on 'again' and the

abruptness of 'not bad', evokes the sense of the poem not really ending properly but

carrying on like the speakers, walking into silence and space:

> More scouts than strangers, ghosts who'd walked abroad
> Unfazed by light, to make a new beginning
> And make a go of it, alive and sinning,
> Ourselves again, free-willed again, not bad.

At home beyond the tribe, identity or being 'ourselves' is located in territory which

is not specifically Irish but in landscape like the "'Townland of Peace', that poem of

dream farms/ [o]utside all contention".[104] The burdens of history, myth and local

history like that of the 'four young brothers' in 'The Tollund Man' are absent. The

figures in the poem travel far out beyond the barricades creating their own routes

rather than setting down roots. This reading might be criticized for positing a

transnational essence. But it also refuses the groundings of the 'local', separatist or

'uncontaminated' understanding which prioritizes one identity over another. In

Deleuzian terms, the 'footloose' couple in 'Tollund' are travelling a rhizome, and as they refuse containment in one place, they avoid reiterating the structures of their oppression in a utopian move towards a place '[o]utside all contention'.

Stuart Hall describes the post-colonial vision as re-reading the binary forms in which the colonial encounter has for too long been represented: 'It obliges us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries for ever'. 'Tollund' re-reads and revisits 'The Tollund Man' in an act of 'transculturation' or 'cultural translation' where Danish and English exist alongside one another and

> It is precisely this "double inscription", breaking down the clearly demarcated inside/outside of the colonial system on which the histories of imperialism have thrived for so long, which the concept of the "post-colonial" has done so much to bring to the fore.[105]

Both Denmark and England have dominated other countries such as Iceland and Ireland. Denmark was also colonized by Sweden and, of course, Ireland was colonized by the Danes in the tenth century. Making links between Danish and English languages written on the signs, Heaney breaks down the dividing line between different imperialisms and extends his comparison of Ireland and Iceland as colonized countries which is found in North. This takes identity out of nationalist preoccupations with the binary relation between Irish and British identities, and resituates the experience of Irish history in a more European context, providing the potential to break from the residues of an oppositional self-identification that exists in the colonial encounter between Ireland and England. As the dividing line between different imperialisms is expanded and broken, the poem translates Irish subjugation and British tyranny into a Scandinavian context, where the displaced

poetic speakers break from preoccupations with rootedness to become 'footloose' and perhaps also fancy free.

In this way, Heaney's work moves along the lines of recent post-colonial theory rather than a specifically nationalist politics. That is, if theorization of the post-colonial is understood in Colin Graham's words as still placing "ultimate importance on the nation as the cultural dynamic of colonialism/post-colonialism; but it stops celebrating the nation and seeks to demystify the 'pathos of authenticity' which the nation demands".[106] In his essay "'Liminal Spaces': Post-Colonial Theories and Irish Culture" (1994), Graham makes an important distinction between post-colonial nationalism that celebrates a 'pathos of authenticity' and post-colonial post-nationalism which seeks to demystify such a celebration demanded by the nation. Comparably, 'Tollund' questions the dividing lines between insiders and outsiders, or those included and excluded by the 'pathos of authenticity' which enables a circle of containment to be drawn around the nation. The poem makes identifiable 'liminal spaces' where the opposition of colonizer and colonized breaks down with the 'potential to shatter the self image of nationalism'.[107] Visiting Denmark, 'Tollund' thinks the cultural consequences of the colonizing process diasporically and in non-originary ways. In the face of unproblematically digging the past for an authentic sense of Irishness, 'The Tollund Man' and 'Tollund', notice how sacrosanct versions of history and nationality, wound and cut out historical subjects from their present moment in time. Freed from the historical crypt, 'Tollund''s unheimlich 'ghosts' have flown into the future of 'The Tollund Man' in an attempt at rebirth into the present of 'Tollund': 'Ourselves again, free-willed again, not bad'.

Using Hall's terms, which are post-colonial rather than traditional nationalist

terms, my argument is that 'Tollund'

> ... re-read[s] "colonization" as part of an essentially transnational and transcultural "global" process - and it produces a decentred, diasporic or "global" rewriting of earlier, nation-centred imperial grand narratives ... It is about how the lateral and transverse cross-relations of what Gilroy calls the "diasporic" supplement and simultaneously dis-place the centre-periphery, and the global/local reciprocally re-organize and re-shape one another.[108]

Hall argues that hybrid, transcultural movements inscribed in the history of

colonialism in binary terms, have emerged as new and disrupting forms: 'They

reposition and dis-place, "difference" without, in the Hegelian sense "overcoming"

it'.[109] In this way, the post-colonial and Heaney's poetry thinks the cultural

consequences of the colonizing process in non-originary ways. Heaney/Sweeney

has travelled a long way since North, displacing both colonialism and nationalism on

his way. Questioning standard lines of thought, Heaney positions himself within the

tendency of anti-colonial writing to transfer attention from what is imagined as

'central' to a critique of representations of centrality.

The overtly political, (or what we take to be political), agenda of North has been

replaced by a less publically motivated anti-colonial vision that has in many ways

been there from the start with the unrooted figure of Antaeus who is 'raised up'

'into a dream of loss'.[110] On the one hand, this leads to uncertainty whether

'Tollund' imagines that one must leave Irish territory in order to find freedom and

how far this poem altogether destroys the nationalist issue of repossessing territory,

providing only 'pap for the dispossessed'. On the other hand, conceiving a more

free space, a fifth province or healed mind of Ireland can be connected with the

idealism of Irish nationalism as it attempts to suture a schizophrenic past of

dividedness that is problematized in 'Making Strange' and 'The Other Side', and which remains testimony to the epistemic violence of colonial imposition.

What is clear is that Heaney's later poetry, from the early 1980s onwards, is less overtly engaging with the Irish landscape as a stable source to be mined for a national consciousness since the territory itself is a contested terrain and far from the 'Townland of Peace' imagined in 'Tollund'. Rather, he subtly explores the epistemic and territorial limits inscribed by both a colonial and nationalist inheritance. Moving away from preoccupations with representing the Irish landscape and an Irish past, Heaney flies Sweeney-like into the more international arena of his poem 'Tollund'. In this way, Heaney's poetry is post-colonial and post-nationalist in its vision, aligned less with the tradition of an authentic Irish national consciousness alluded to by Yeats and more with the anti-foundational poetics of Paul Muldoon. Heaney's later poetry dwells less with the dead of North and looks more towards the visionary aspects of poetry. The next chapter, explores Tom Paulin's critical essays and poetry from Walking a Line (1994) in terms of this movement within contemporary Irish poetry which leaves a specifically Irish landscape in favour of seeing things afresh. Paulin has emphasized the importance of Robert Frost in relation not only to Heaney but also in connection with his own poetry.[111] How far does Paulin's poetry seek to go 'above the brim', walk a line or 'write a bare wire', and what effect does his attraction to the avant-garde aspects of Paul Klee's work have on readings of Paulin as a political essayist?[112]

'Notes to Chapter One'

[1] This chapter was developed from a paper I gave at the University of Kent Literature and Place Research Seminar on 11th March 1998. I would like to thank my audience for their questions and comments. The chapter is to be published by Cambridge University Press in a book entitled Literature & Place, (March 2000), eds., Peter Brown & Mike Irwin. Cf. Seamus Heaney, Sweeney Astray, (London: Faber, 1983), p.9.

[2] Heaney, Wintering Out, (London: Faber, 1972). Heaney, North, (London: Faber, 1975).

[3] Heaney, The Spirit Level, (London: Faber, 1996).

[4] David Lloyd, 'Pap For the Dispossessed: Seamus Heaney and the Poetics of Identity', Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment, (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993), p.23.

[5] Daniel Corkery, Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature, (Cork: University Press, 1931), pp.14-15.

[6] Cf. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism, (London: Verso, 1983); Jacqueline Rose, States of Fantasy: The Clarendon Lectures in English Literature, 1994, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

[7] John Montague, 'The Severed Head', The Rough Field, (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1972), pp.31, 35.

[8] Lloyd, p.16.

[9] William Butler Yeats, Uncollected Prose I, ed., J. Fraynes, (New York: 1970), p.104. Also cited by Seamus Deane, A Short History of Irish Literature, (Notre Dame: U. P., 1986), p.142.

[10] Heaney, 'Frontiers of Writing', The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures, (London: Faber, 1995), p.199.

[11] William Butler Yeats, The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, (London: Macmillan, 1933, repr.1971). 'The Rose Tree', p.206; 'Easter 1916', pp.202-205 from Michael Robartes and the Dancer (1921) 'To Ireland in the Coming Times', pp.56-58 from The Rose (1893).

[12] Declan Kiberd, Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation, (London: Cape, 1995), p.202.

[13] David Cairns and Shaun Richards, Writing Ireland: colonialism, nationalism and literature, (Manchester: U.P., 1988), p.104. Cf. Desmond Ryan, The 1916 Poets, [Westport (Conn.): Greenwood Press, 1963], p.201.

[14] Lloyd, p.89.

[15] Thomas Osborne Davis (1814-45) was a Protestant barrister, poet and graduate of Trinity College Dublin, and one of the founders of The Nation. Sir Samuel Ferguson was another Protestant poet, while James Clarence Mangan translated and rewrote 'Róisín Dubh'.

[16] Hannah Arendt, Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought, (London: Faber, 1958), pp.10-11. Arendt appears in the epigraph to Richard Kearney's Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture, (Dublin: Wolfhound 1988): 'The appeal to thought arises in the odd in-between period which sometimes inserts itself into historical time when not only the later historians but the actors and witnesses, the living themselves, become aware of an interval in time which is altogether determined by things which are no longer and by things which are not yet. In history, these intervals have shown more than once that they may contain the moment of truth'.

[17] Cf. Thomas Docherty's discussion of Augustine in John Donne Undone, (London: Methuen, 1986), p.96. Although here, he provides no reference, Docherty is referring to Augustine, City of God, trans. Henry Bettenson, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp.519-20.

[18] Lloyd, pp.71-74.

[19] Homi Bhahba, Nation and Narration, (London: Routledge, 1990), p.3.

[20] Lloyd, p.69.

[21] Deane, p.203.

[22] Lloyd, pp.16-20.

[23] Heaney, 'Frontiers of Writing', p.195.

[24] Heaney, 'Sense of Place', Preoccupations, (London: Faber, 1980), pp.148-9.

[25] Lloyd, p.20.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p.22.

[28] Scott Brewster, 'A Residual Poetry: Heaney, Mahon and Hedgehog History', Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies, Spring/ Summer 1998, p.59.

[29] Docherty, After Theory, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1996), p.222.

[30] Ibid., pp.222-3.

[31] Heaney, 'The Tollund Man' from Wintering Out (1972), Selected Poems: 1965-75, (London: Faber, 1980), pp.78-79.

[32] Ciaran Carson in Edna Longley, Poetry in the Wars, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1986), p.157. Carson, the Honest Ulsterman, (Belfast), No.50, p.184.

[33] Longley, Poetry in the Wars, p.151.

[34] Cf. The Literary Writings of Patrick Pearse, (Cork: Mercier Press, 1979). Joseph Plunkett, 'The Little Black Rose Shall Be Red At Last' dedicated to Cathleen Ní Houlihan. Cf. Desmond Ryan, The 1916 Poets, (Westport: Greenwood, Press 1963), p.201. Longley, Poetry in the Wars, p.151, p.168.

[35] Tejaswini Niranjana, Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context, (California: University Press, 1992), p.167.

[36] Heaney, 'Irish Eyes', Listener, 28 Dec., 1967, p.851.

[37] Docherty, 'Ana-; or Postmodernism, Landscape, Seamus Heaney', Anthony Easthope and John O. Thompson, eds., Contemporary Poetry Meets Modern Theory, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991), p.70. Docherty is referring to 'The Grauballe Man', North, pp.28-29.

[38] Heaney, Station Island, p.94.

[39] Neil Corcoran, Seamus Heaney, (London: Faber, 1996), p.131.

[40] Darcy O'Brien, 'Piety and Modernism': Seamus Heaney's Station Island', James Joyce Quarterly, Vol.26, (Fall, 1988-89), p.60.

[41] Robert Trac y, 'Into An Irish Free State: Heaney, Sweeney and Clearing Away', Michael Kenneally, Contemporary Irish Literature, Studies in Contemporary Irish Literature 2, Irish Literary Studies 43, (Bucks: Gerrards Cross, 1995), pp.238-262, p.239.

[42] Corcoran, p.172.

[43] Heaney, Sweeney Astray, (London: Faber, 1983), ii.

[44] Deane, 'Unhappy and at Home: Interview with Seamus Heaney', in Mark Patrick Hederman and Richard Kearney, eds., The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies, (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1982), p.70.

[45] Heaney, Station Island, 'Sweeney Redivivus', p.98.

[46] Cf. Anthony Clare, In the Psychiatrist's Chair, (London: Chatto, 1998). Clare is a broadcaster and Professor of Psychiatry at Trinity College Dublin who explores schizophrenia and the large number of cases in Ireland. Heaney's notion of 'divided consciousness' can also be compared with the Algerian writer and psychiatrist, Franz Fanon in Black Skin, White Masks, (London: Pluto, 1986).

[47] Corcoran, Seamus Heaney, p.40.

[48] Richard Kearney, 'From Transitions' in Seamus Deane, ed., The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing Vol.3, (London: Faber, 1991), p.632.

[49] Ibid., p.631.

[50] Heaney, 'Frontiers of Writing', The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures, p.188.

[51] Ibid., pp.186-203.

[52] Heaney, 'Terminus', The Haw Lantern, (London: Faber, 1987), pp.4-5.

[53] John Redmond, 'A lesson in verse', Saturday Review of The Guardian, Saturday September 19th 1998, p.9.

[54] Heaney, 'Station Island', Station Island, p.93.

[55] Corcoran, Seamus Heaney, p.216, p.218.

[56] Of course, this movement out of Ireland was also taken by Heaney's predecessor, W. B. Yeats, in his Byzantium poems.

[57] Hart, 'Heaney Among the Deconstructionists', Journal of Modern Literature, Vol.16, No.4, Spring 1990, p.478.

[58] Ibid. Here, Hart draws on Heaney's elegy for his former Harvard colleague, Robert Fitzgerald.

[59] Ibid., p.467. Cf. Terry Eagleton, 'Turning Towards Europe', Time Literary Supplement, 10-16th Feb., 1989, p.132.

[60] Stuart Hall, Questions of Cultural Identity, ed., Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, (London: Sage, 1996), p.16.

[61] Heaney, 'The Placeless Heaven: Another Look at Kavanagh', The Government of the Tongue, (London: Faber, 1988), p.4.

[62] Heaney, 'The Old Icons', Station Island, p.117.

[63] Cf. Paul Muldoon's poem 'The Frog', New Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), p.76. 'The Frog' has the image of a 'bubble in my spirit level' which is like the eye of the frog. Amid images of green, the poem playfully suggests that the 'moral' 'in this story' 'for our times' could 'surely' be found by 'squeezing' it our of the frog. But the green essence of the frog, which is evocative perhaps of nationalist green from an Emerald Isle that hopes for an essence or essentialist truth for the nation, is 'like the juice of freshly squeezed limes', and no more telling about 'the entire population of Ireland' than is the bubble amid the green liquid of the spirit level. In Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry, (Oxford: University Press, 1993), Clair Wills notices that "Muldoon's work is notable for its refusal to force disparate elements into a coherent narrative that can give meaning to experience" (p.22). My argument is that this is also the effect of Heaney's poems from Station Island to The Spirit Level which provide no easy solution for disparate elements.

[64] Heaney, 'Making Strange', Station Island, p.32.

[65] Notice quotation above from Heaney's essay 'Frontiers of Writing' where he comments in a self-reflective way whilst lecturing in Oxford, how in Ulster the 'whole population are adepts in the mystery of living in two places at one time'. Heaney's poem 'Making Strange' attempts to be 'adept' in a comparable way.

[66] Heaney, The Haw Lantern, (London: Faber, 1987), p.28.

[67] Jean-François Lyotard, The Differend (1983), trans. Georges van den Abbeele, (Manchester: University Press, 1988). See a useful commentary on this by Simon During, 'Postmodernism or Post-colonialism', Postmodernism: A Reader, ed., Thomas Docherty, (London: Harvester, 1993), pp.455-58.

[68] Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique', (1917), Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader, ed., David Lodge, (London: Longman, 1988), pp.16-30, p.20, p.27.

[69] 'Poems of place' which explore the geographical and etymological aspects of the Irish landscape. Cf. Clair Wills, 'Language, Politics, Narrative, Political Violence', in Robert Young, ed., The Oxford Literary Review: Neocolonialism, p.37.

[70] Andrew Murphy, Seamus Heaney, (Plymouth: Northcote, 1996), p.27.

[71] Heaney, Selected Poems, 'Broagh', Wintering Out, p.66.

[72] Heaney, 'Frontiers of Writing', p.194.

[73] Longley, Poetry in the Wars, p.201.

[74] Heaney, Wintering Out, p.35.

[75] Heaney, 'Patrick Kavanagh', PN Review, (1980), p.7.

[76] Heaney, 'The King of the Ditchbacks', Station Island, p.57.

[77] Murphy, Seamus Heaney, p.85.

[78] Heaney, 'Above the Brim: On Robert Frost', Salmagundi, No.s 88-9, Fall 1990 - Winter 1991, p.283.

[79] Ibid., pp.284-5.

[80] On the one hand, the lectures express the sense of alienation Heaney feels on Oxford territory as 'an Irishman'. On the other hand, Heaney is still able to engage in an academic discourse that alludes to an imagined community of 'our knowledge'; he is both insider and outsider, placed and displaced. As a person who is not English, Heaney claims his unhomeliness since Oxford is imagined as synonymous with Englishness (in spite of the numbers of 'foreigners' there). In claiming his strangeness, Heaney somehow becomes more at home and more able to use phrases such as 'our knowledge' and 'our experience'. Later in the lectures, Heaney describes how Englishness does not have to deal with the schizophrenia of a fractured history and politics such as that of the North of Ireland. Heaney argues that this is because England has not been invaded since 1066. Here, Heaney ignores how the terrain of England is not homogenous since there are radical differences between North and South, East and West, which are also differences of class, job opportunity, and even speed and time, whereby Cornwall and the South West are considered 'more backward' than London. In the role of outsider at Oxford, which is partly forced upon Heaney and partly manipulated by him, he ignores the 'English' outsiders who are unheimlich or placed beyond a more centralized understanding of English geography which posits Oxford/ London/ the South East as the national

centre. A comparison can be made between conceptions of English identity and Irish identity whereby both countries have certain areas that are considered more authentically 'Irish' or 'English' than others. Moreover, both countries experience localized differences between communities within 'the nation' which can be made less obvious by travel or education, or can be easily identified by inhabitants of 'the nation'. In addition, there is an immigrant population who are 'British yet not'. In order to deconstruct the homogenizing forces of national identity, it is necessary to become stranger in or outside the 'native land', or at least to acknowledge the unheimlich resting within a national culture. Hence, rather than looking to assert Irishness in the face of Englishness a more telling response would be to contest the power and unity of Englishness.

[81] Heaney, 'Above the Brim', p.286.

[82] Homi Bhabha, 'Culture's In-Between', Hall, Questions of Cultural Identity, p.54.

[83] This oscillation between real and imaginary world can be read in terms of the death of Heaney's father whereby the ghostly world of the dead parent invades upon the everyday with the effect that the poetic speaker 'sees things'.

[84] Heaney, 'The Impact of Translation', The Government of the Tongue, p.44.

[85] Heaney, 'SQUARINGS': 'Settings', xxiv, Seeing Things, (London: Faber, 1991), p.80.

[86] Hall, Questions of Cultural Identity, p.1. Hall is using Jacques Derrida's Positions, (Chicago: University Press, 1981).

[87] Heaney, 'Frontiers of Writing', p.203.

[88] Murphy, Seamus Heaney, p.85.

[89] Heaney, 'Fosterling', Seeing Things, p.50.

[90] Ibid., 'Markings', p.9.

[91] Heaney, 'Sweeney Redivivus', Station Island, p.97.

[92] Wills, Improprieties, p.31. Wills quotes from Mark Patrick Hederman, 'Poetry and the Fifth Province', Crane Bag, 9:1, (1985), p.116.

[93] Heaney, 'First Words', The Spirit Level, p.38.

[94] Corcoran, p.224. Unfortunately, Corcoran does not footnote this comment so I cannot provide a reference for the Heaney interview.

[95] Ibid., p.152.

[96] Niranjana, Siting Translation, p.40.

[97] Ibid., p.44.

[98] Cf. Chapter on 'Postmodernism and the Post-Colonial', Thomas Docherty, ed., Postmodernism: A Reader, (London: Harvester, 1993).

[99] Docherty, Alterities, (Oxford: University Press, 1996), pp.34-5.

[100] Cf. Heaney, 'The Flight Path', The Spirit Level, p.22-6.

[101] Docherty, Alterities, p.115.

[102] Cf. Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Rapaël Confiant, Éloge de la Creolité, (Éditions Gallimard, 1993); Francesca Neri, 'The New Antillean Discourse: Readings of Identity in the Critical Essays of Édouard Glissant', Thesis from The University of Kent, 1996, p.2.

[103] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, On the Line, [New York: Semiotext(e), 1983], p.47.

[104] Heaney, 'Tollund', The Spirit Level, p.69.

[105] Stuart Hall, Iain Chambers & Lidia Curti, eds., The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.247.

[106] Colin Graham, "Rejoinder: The Irish 'Post-'? A Reply to Gerry Smyth", Irish Studies Review, No.13, Winter 1995/6, p.35.

[107] Graham, 'Liminal Spaces': Post-Colonial Theories and Irish Culture', The Irish Review, No.16, Autumn/Winter 1994, p.35.

[108] Hall, The Post-Colonial Question, p.247.

[109] Ibid., p.251.

[110] Heaney, North, pp.46-7.

[111] Cf. Appendices One. Cf. Sarah Fulford, 'An Interview With Tom Paulin', Irish Studies Review, No.19, Summer 1997, pp.2-5; 'The Strangeness of the Script: Tom Paulin in Conversation', Reviewing Ireland: Essays and Interviews from Irish Studies Review, eds., Sarah Briggs, Paul Hyland & Neil Sammells, (Bath: Sulis, 1998), pp.320-27.

[112] Cf. Corcoran, Seamus Heaney, 'Writing a Bare Wire: Station Island (1984)', pp.110-134.

CHAPTER TWO

DIVING OFF THE EDGE: TOM PAULIN'S <u>WALKING A LINE</u>

In <u>Walking a Line</u> my interest is in the dangerous edge of things.
Tom Paulin, (1996).[1]

Paulin: Poet and Essayist

This chapter will explore how Tom Paulin's poetry has moved away from the ground of the Irish national question and how <u>Walking a Line</u> (1994) provides a more complex understanding of the relationship between aesthetics, politics and identity. Since his initial publication of <u>A State of Justice</u> (1977), Paulin as essayist, academic and poet, has been described by critics such as Patricia Craig in terms of the 'social criticism' of his work. In his review of <u>Fivemiletown</u> (1987), George Watson refers to Paulin as 'an uncomfortable, spikey poet', while Kathleen Jamie calls him a 'liberating critic' and portrays Paulin as a poetic rebel and critical iconoclast.[2] What these and most of Paulin's reviewers share is the idea that, as a Northern Irish poet, he is more politically grounded than his counterpart, Paul Muldoon; a characterization that is held onto by Paulin himself in his critical essays and television appearances.

Hence, Elmer Andrews views Paulin as an 'underground resistance fighter', a label that has connotations of the Second World War, claiming that

> Poetry, for Tom Paulin, is a subversive act, a defiance of a linguistic and literary order designed for the ideological suppression or pacification of potentially rebellious impulses. It is a paradigmatic gesture of spontaneity in an increasingly manipulated world.[3]

In spite of his posturing as a hardened political poet, in <u>Writing to the Moment</u> (1996) Paulin makes an important distinction about what constitutes political poetry and aligns his poetry closer to the lyric tradition of John Clare than would be expected from the 'resistance fighter':

> Although the imagination can be strengthened rather than distorted by ideology, my definition of a political poem does not assume that such poems make an ideological statement. Instead they can embody a general historical awareness – an observation of the rain – rather than offering a specific attitude to state affairs.[4]

Here, Paulin redefines what we take to be political arguing beyond crude Marxist models which suggest that 'a specific attitude to state affairs' constitutes a truly political and historical poem. Instead, he talks of the poem embodying a 'general historical awareness'. This chapter will ask how such an 'historical awareness' is achieved, what does it mean for the poet to be politically engaged, and what is the relationship between aesthetics and politics in Paulin's poetry? The chapter aims to redefine how we think the political and ask what effects this has on how we understand the aesthetic concerns of Paulin's collection <u>Walking a Line</u> (1994), in order to conclude that there is no viable separation between politics and aesthetics.

In addition, this chapter will argue that the position of Paulin as poet is not always the same as his role as critical essayist. An example of this is found in his collection of essays, <u>Writing to the Moment</u>, when Paulin clearly states his position in the theory wars of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Melodramatically, he expresses

contempt for a new generation of critics who, in his opinion, possess a 'bizarre

critical vocabulary' and take everyone 'for a ride'. He attacks the theorist who takes

'literary texts apart', explaining 'their contradictions, those abysses of meaning' into

which the theorists 'are forever receding'.[5] However, this chapter will notice how in

spite of his protestations, Paulin's recent poetry confronts these 'abysses of meaning'

as he tests the medium within which he works. Paulin's poetry alludes to the

unamenable to representation which can be defined as the 'reality' that cannot be

brought to representation; this has political repercussions and will be compared with

the deterritorializing vision elaborated in the last chapter which referred, in

particular, to poems from Heaney's Seeing Things (1991).

In her essay 'Tom Paulin: Enlightening the Tribe' (1993), Clair Wills understands

Paulin's poetry as 'dedicated to a post-colonial and post-imperial outlook' with a

"desire to 'deconstruct' the notion of Englishness".[6] Yet Paulin's poetry finds it

difficult to 'speak plainly for a new civility' and the effects of Walking a Line are far

from straightforward.[7] Wills has persuasively brought attention to how a

postmodern artistic agenda which attacks foundational thought may seem different

from Paulin's professed Enlightenment republican ideal. She argues that Paulin writes

within the limits of the Enlightenment values that he finds himself forced to critique.

In his essays, Paulin has with unprecedented optimism drawn on Enlightenment

thought which is explained by Isaiah Berlin in terms of an ideal secular republic:

wholly just, wholly virtuous, the wholly satisfied society that is imagined by the

cultured and educated men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[8] Paulin

writes: 'In my view it is impossible to achieve a wide and cultivated cosmopolitan

outlook without beginning - like a diver kicking off from a springboard - from the

idea of a secular republic'.[9]

Regarding this comment, Wills's conclusion that Paulin is not a postmodern poet

due to his entrenchment in the critical insights and foundational philosophies of the

European Enlightenment does not initially seem to be illogical. She writes: "the

general description of Paulin's style as 'postmodern' does not acknowledge the

political dimension of his attempt to formulate a poetics in opposition to the post-

Romantic aesthetics of privacy, which Paulin sees as linked to a conservative

politics".[10] Here, Wills outlines how Paulin's political vision derives from the

classical and secular ideals of the eighteenth century, and indicates his impatience

with a conservative strain in English politics and literature which pays attention to

'private' as opposed to 'public' realms. However, this chapter will examine how

Paulin's poetry often writes of an individualized and 'private' experience.

Comparing Paulin with the figure of Paul Klee, the chapter will argue that there is no

easy line to be drawn between an aesthetics of privacy and a public politics, and that

each informs the other. This is merely the first contradiction that exists between

Wills's investigation of Paulin's poetry and Walking a Line.

Moreover, there is a more complex relationship between Enlightenment values,

Northern Unionism and the Dissenting tradition in the North of Ireland than Wills

allows. For instance, Paulin views Northern Unionism as a kind of failed

Presbyterianism whereby the Dissenting tradition with which Presbyterians were

associated has been too easily forgotten. Wills does not ignore how in The Riot Act

(1985) Northern Unionism is represented perverting the values of the

Enlightenment,[11] and she admits that the style of Paulin's poems does sometimes suggest a high degree of scepticism as to the possibility of realizing a truly representative institution, and the true language it could use as a democratic "house of speech".[12] So there is a tension between how far Paulin's poetic style undoes the professed political and ideological stance of his critical essays.

Nevertheless, following her argument that Paulin cannot be a postmodern poet, Wills chooses not to view his scepticism as an example of how, unlike his essays, Paulin's poetry acknowledges the inherent duplicity of language and the failure of representative politics in the North of Ireland. Rather, she emphasizes how the duplicity of Paulin's poetic language is an example of how Paulin's political intentions of creating a rational discourse necessarily fail. She comments that his poems are

> ... in part acknowledgements of the need to include, desire, sensuousness, and particularity within the classical Enlightenment ideals of reason and justice ... his model of politics remains weighted towards the masculine, Protestant, Enlightenment tradition.[13]

This chapter will explore, how far Paulin's poetry slips away from the rational stance of his critical essays. This will involve identifying a tension within his poetry between sense and sensibility, sense and nonsense, Enlightenment and Romanticism, that can be found in the eighteenth century context of work by William Hazlitt on whom Paulin has lectured and written.[14] The chapter will argue that such tensions are also played out within the Modernist context of Paul Klee on whose work Paulin draws in <u>Walking A Line</u>.

It is necessary to recognize the separate personalities of and demands on, the poet

and the polemical essayist, and to notice the different effects of the media in which

they write. For instance, <u>Walking a Line</u> is written a year after Wills's essay on

Paulin, and the chapter will argue that it runs like quicksilver from the grasp of

Paulin's essays: that is, beyond the Enlightenment world of William Hazlitt into an

avant-garde context experienced by Paul Klee. The central argument is that rather

than rely on the rigid political base of the 'secular republic', <u>Walking a Line</u> dives

from it into a realm where there is no firm ground on which to stand and argue. The

rug is pulled away from beneath dogged belief; the speaker dives, deterritorializes

and denies the foundational. In spite of Paulin's statement that the postmodern is 'a

black hole as a concept'[15] and his rigorous denial of the value of contemporary

critical theory, the chapter will demonstrate how <u>Walking a Line</u> comes closer to the

avant-garde than the Enlightenment ideology of a secular republic that haunts

<u>Writing to the Moment</u>.

Paulin's <u>Walking a Line</u> does not offer the reader a straightforward path towards

understanding the world; rather, it takes a more delirious, rhizomatic or squiggly line

that is evocative of Paul Klee's paintings, art theory and diaries, all of which haunt

Paulin's collection. This chapter argues that there is a tension within the poetry

between a rational and sensible epistemology, and irrational and sensual

representations of the world. This will lead to the observation that <u>Walking a Line</u>

does not provide readers with a straightforward expression of the politics of

Enlightened Dissent. Rather, the poetry connects more with a deterritorializing

vision that questions authenticity. This has been discussed in the previous chapter on

Seamus Heaney where he provides a more critical historical consciousness that is far from self-affirming.

Rather than continue the characterization of Paulin as straight-talking political activist and rebel, this chapter will look at a more fruitful aspect of Elmer Andrews's argument which is that Paulin's poetry 'operates in the danger zones of margins and boundaries ... where it may be he can release new energies from the dead hand of history and state power ... searching the gaps in discourse, the blanks and holes and silences ...' [16] Elsewhere, Andrews comments that 'the best contemporary Irish poetry is a poetry on the edge' and he applauds Paulin's poetry, from before Walking a Line, for constantly throwing us off balance in a way that is comparable with Heaney's preoccupations with balance in the spirit level.[17] Unlike Heaney, Paulin's position is not as the middle man but as the poet pacing the precipice which recalls his poem 'The Defenestration of Hillsborough' (1987) where he speaks of the future for dogged Unionists: 'This means we have a choice:/ Either to jump or get pushed'.[18] As Andrews notices: "To jump is to liberate the self from the rigid structures by which consciousness is determined, to escape from a constricting environment. Paulin enacts this 'jump' in the structures of his poetry".[19] How far then, does Walking a Line risk falling off the line and attempt to escape from all that is constricting, how far can this be connected with Romantic and avant-garde explorations of the sublime, and what kind of politics does this provide?

Walking a Line, Paul Klee and Délire

Walking a Line remembers the avant-garde artist Paul Klee whose painting and

writing confronts the sublime or the 'dangerous edge of things', in a paradoxical

effort to make visible the invisible or that which evades representation. While

attracted to the whimsical figure of Klee who wrote and lectured on art theory,

Paulin, in his poetry, cannot remain in a refuge away from contemporary critical and

aesthetic theory. In addition, while exploring representation alongside the work of

an avant-garde artist, it is less possible for Paulin's poetry to establish a firm

foundation of belief with the effect that Walking a Line performs an avant-garde

and experimental act of representation rather than claiming a total or stable

knowledge of the world. The title of Walking a Line connects with the notion of the

artist or writer 'taking a line out for a walk'.[20] The linguistic line, like the line of the

artist's brush, may be taken out for a walk which the audience follow doggedly - the

lead is held by the artist and viewers trail behind. The lines of language or the

artist's line are evocative of the limits of language or the containment of colour. For

Klee, the 'line is the most limited dimension of art being solely a matter of

measurement'.[21] Klee imagines being trapped or 'limited' by the lines rather like the

figures edged with thick black borders in his paintings.

While evocative of territorial, linguistic and ideological lines, Walking a Line

suggests a playful art which is whimsical, fantastic, capricious or irrational. The

collection moves away from the overtly political concerns of Paulin's poetry seven

years earlier in Fivemiletown as the poetic speaker becomes an artful dodger who

avoids obsessions with ideological lines, as embodied by the territorial line of the

Partition. The poems hint at the experimental nature of art rather than at a

specifically political agenda followed by the artist; looking to an art that is romantic

rather than enlightened, irrational rather than rational, and sensual rather than

sensible. In order to tease out the implications of Walking a Line, it is necessary to

preface my discussion of the poems with an explanation of Paul Klee's art theories

in relation to the work of critical theorists.

In 'La Ligne et la Lettre' (1971) which provides analysis of Paul Klee's art and

theories, Jean-François Lyotard argues via the work and diaries of Klee, that the

lines of language and representation can be tamed but they are also haunted by a

primal excess:

> Ecriture presque directe du fantasme ... [est] délire du processus primaire, capable
> de faire violence à toute écriture de la représentation ...22

Hence:

> Monde possible, l'oeuvre ne perd pas son allure de venu d'ailleurs, malgré sa
> réalité. La creativité excède la créature.23

In this way, the unseen haunts the seen.

In his review of Discours, Figure (1971) from 1984 and entitled 'The Letter and

the Line: Discourse and its other in Lyotard', Peter Dews notes Lyotard's

suggestion that the mark of the Western intellectual tradition has been its occlusion

of the world of the senses. Hence, Lyotard opposes the "primary position of the

symbolic" with the effect that the non-rational, non-linguistic, non-Enlightened and

non-sensical are thereby prioritized in Lyotard's argument. Dews translates the

opening of Lyotard's text:

> This book protests: that the given is not a text, that there is within it a density, or
> rather a constitutive difference, which is not read, but to be seen: and that this
> difference, and the immobile mobility which reveals it, is what is continually
> forgotten in the process of signification.[24]

Hence, 'the speaker is torn away from that of which he speaks, or this is torn away

from him, and he continues to hold it at a distance in speaking, as the object of his

discourse, in a "vision"'.[25] Lyotard writes: 'to affirm that everything is sayable; this

is true; but what is not true is that all signification or discourse can gather up all the

sense of the sayable. One can say that the tree is green, but the colour will not have

been put into the sentence'. As Dews explains, throughout Discours, Figure this

awareness of the "unsuppressible gap" between the sensible and the intelligible (or

sensibility and sense) is expressed in terms of a contrast between the "letter" and

"the line", between a graphic and a figural space.[26]

Lyotard draws on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Le Visible et L'invisible (1981), to

argue that: 'Desire does not speak, it violates the order of speech' which takes us to

the discursive sabotage alluded to in Julia Kristeva's 'Revolution in Poetic Language

(1974) which will be discussed in relation to the female poets in the next section.[27]

For Lyotard, via Merleau-Ponty, the invisible world violates the visible world as the

Freudian unconscious haunts consciousness. In this way, the work of art is

"constantly on the edge of its own rupture"[28] which takes us back to Elmer

Andrews's statement about poetry on the edge and Paulin's proclamation that his

poetry is interested in 'the dangerous edge of things'. Discours, Figure notices how

linguistic representation unsuccessfully attempts to edit out alterity or, in Dews's

words: its incorporation of its excluded others.[29]

The artwork of Klee, on whom Paulin draws, attempts to tap into the unamenable

to representation or a nonsensical beyond of discourse. As the art critic Robert Fisher

argues:

> Paul Klee consumed himself with a passion for communicating the
> incomprehensible. He sought to take the viewer beyond the concepts of language,
> beyond the idea that the real world is what we see, and to remind those who looked
> at his works that life is full of mysteries ... His mission, he preached constantly
> was to make visible that which is invisible ...[30]

Klee's art pays attention to something other that cannot be visually articulated.

Klee's allusions to the unamenable to representation, the activity of making visible

(das Sichtbarmachen) and an artistic in-between world (ein zwischenwelt), indicate a

frontier of delirium or frenzy, where the primal or pre-signifying haunts the edges of

representation, and nonsense underlies sense.

Klee notes in his diary on New Year's Eve of 1909: 'Mit morgensterns

Galgenliedern sei das Jahhr [1909] beschlossen'.[31] The German poet Christian

Morgenstern wrote Galgenleider (Whistles in the Dark) in 1905 and his nonsensical

verse was prefaced with the following:

> Laß die Moleküte rasen
> was sie auch zusammen knobeln!
> Laß das Tüfleln, laß das Holbeln,
> heilig halte die Ekstasen.[32]

Morgenstern created doodles and used them as vignettes between his poems which

validate personal visions and dreams, an unconscious or delirious side of art. These

drawings in Galgenlieder are evocative of Klee's art which has been described as

childish and whimsical. The cover of Morgenstern's text is covered in hieroglyphs

and squiggles of the kind that appear in Klee's art and Paulin's poem 'ञ्ज ऊ ज'ी' in

Walking a Line. As E.H. Gombrich notices in his essay on 'The Image and Word In

Twentieth Century Art' where he discusses the work of Paul Klee in relation to

Morgenstern: 'They are the dreams which arise when the controls are relaxed and

ecstasy wins over fussing and correcting. But they are more than dreams, they are

intimations of a possible reality.'[33] That is, a reality that is at the beyond of

discursive strategies or at a nonsensical limit which is alluded to by Morgenstern's

ecstatic doodling.

Here, it is useful to draw on the concept of délire from Jean-Jacques Lecercle who

published Philosophy through the Looking Glass (1985) after Lyotard published

Discours, Figure. Both theorists acknowledge their debt to Deleuzian rhizomatics

which attempt to take a line of flight in an exploration of the excesses of meaning,

and a delirious borderline between sense and nonsense. Walking a Line will be

examined in terms of Klee's interest in the nonsensical and Jean-Jacques Lecercle's

investigation of the concept of délire. Lecercle explains:

> Délire as I shall now use the word is a form of discourse, which questions our most
> common perceptions of language (whether expressed by linguists or philosophers),
> where the old philosophical questions of the emergence of sense out of nonsense
> receives a new formulation, where the material side of language, its origin in the
> human body and desire, are no longer eclipsed by its abstract aspect (as an
> instrument of communication or expression). Language, nonsense, desire: délire
> accounts for the relations between these three terms.[34]

Délire is understood as a potential delirium at the basis of all discourse whereby the

writer or speaker totters on the brink of language and ideology, and faces the

possibility of falling off sense into nonsense. It is also a term that is related to

'unreading'. The concept of délire will be explored in relation to <u>Walking a Line</u>

and connected with concerns over balancing, flight and borders that have been

discussed in the previous chapter on Seamus Heaney.

Lecercle connects délire with Deleuzian rhizomatic philosophy: 'A tree has a

binary structure and so has délire in so far as it conforms to linguistic law. But a

rhizome has no centre, no structure: neither has délire if it consists in a flow of

words and/or libido'.[35] Délire is comparable with Klee's line alluded to in Paulin's

title: on the one hand, his line is held on the lead of language and on the other, it is

an uncontrollable flow. Lecercle argues:

> ... words often fail us, that is, fail to express what we mean: they utter what we
> refuse to recognize, what we would rather have left unsaid. In other words,
> language becomes tainted by desire, by the actions and passions of our body, by its
> instinctual drives. Language loses its capacity to communicate. But it can also, at
> the same time, increase its power: it ceases to be controlled by the subject but on
> the contrary rules over him [or her]. Instead of truth, we have fiction; instead of
> sense, nonsense or absurdity; instead of abstraction, desire. Instead of method, we
> have the madness of <u>délire</u>.[36]

These comments can be explored in relation to Paulin's poetry and his debt to Paul

Klee. If representation is about making visible, what is the relationship between the

vocal and the visual, poetry and painting? How far does <u>Walking a Line</u> tread like a

tightrope walker between sense and nonsense, and what are the political implications

of such a move?

This question can be contextualized within the modernist tradition of Klee's art. In

<u>Early Modernism</u> (1994), one of Paulin's colleagues at Oxford, Christopher Butler,

notices how modernist art put in doubt the logic of rationality whereby the artist

becomes a critic of Naturalism and Realism in order to become independent of

normal thought processes so as to arrive at a transformed consciousness, often

through the liberation of the unconscious. This movement can be connected with the

obvious later example of Freud, but Butler also traces it back to Nietzsche. He

argues that

> In music, painting, and literature the logic which is usually expressed by an explicit syntax began to be replaced by an (unconsciously driven) associative juxtaposition, in relying upon intuitions which became more and more difficult to interpret, even when justified by an appeal to the exceptional, and often dreamlike, nature of the experience being expressed.[37]

What follows will argue that this is what is happening in Paulin's poetry as he draws

on the work of Klee, and their exploration of nonsense and the dreamlike can be

understood in terms of Lecercle's discussion of délire.

Paulin, Klee and the Hieroglyph

Klee celebrates the simplicity of the artistic line: 'let us content ourselves with the

most primitive of elements, the line. At the dawn of civilization, when writing and

drawing were the same thing, it was the basic element'.[38] Klee looks to an ancient

hieroglyphic writing where the visual image of writing conveyed as much meaning

as the sound of a word. This was a mimetic writing that was closer to the thing that

was being represented which provided a more spontaneous way of seeing and

saying. Taking a line for a walk is evocative of drawing letters or tracing the

squiggle of a hieroglyph. Like Klee's art, Paulin's collection contains within it

hieroglyphic lines. The hieroglyph is a line that is divorced from meaning or writes

a secret meaning beyond our view. As Maurice Blanchot would say in his essay

'The Absence of the Book' (1969): 'such a script is "writing outside of language"'.[39]

Earlier in Fivemiletown, Paulin has playfully entitled one of his poems 'Rosetta

Stone'.[40] The Rosetta Stone, discovered in 1799 was not without its

disappointments. In his Briefe an seinen Bruder August Wilhelm (1890) (Letters to

his brother August Wilhelm), Freidrich Schlegel registered uneasiness about this

new method of decoding the wisdom of the ancients. Schlegel was enthusiastic

about reading Eastern texts closed to Western thought yet also dissatisfied by what

they are revealed by François Champollion to say.[41] Once deciphered, the

hieroglyphic turns out to be like any other known writing, its messages no deeper

than any other text. The translation of Egyptian texts simply retreads the lines of

another language, rather than breaking out into something new or beyond what we

have conceived. However, Schlegel looked to a symbolic representation or another

text beneath the hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics are unusual since due to their mimetic

qualities they present an example where word and meaning are one. In this way they

are more symbolic than any other language system. Therefore, it is impossible to

decipher completely their meaning in a language such as our own. They may be

seen but not completely articulated. In this case, representation relies on the visual

rather than on the audible and there is an excess that cannot be translated.

Such a mode of representation is discussed by Ernest Fenollosa in his unfinished

essay, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry (1936), which was

edited by Ezra Pound. Fenollosa argues:

> One superiority of verbal poetry as an art rests in its getting back to the fundamental reality of time. Chinese poetry has the unique advantage of combining both elements. It speaks at once with the vividness of painting, and with the mobility of sounds.[42]

Fenollosa comments on the ability of the Chinese character to offer a more immediate representation that is both visual and linguistic, whereby word and image appeal to the reader's sense of both sight and sound. This 'brings language close to things' and provides impetus for the notion of a more 'concrete poetry'.[43] A 'vivid shorthand' of 'pictures of actions and processes in nature', the Chinese character provides us with a 'process of metaphor' that alludes to both the 'seen' and the 'unseen', by using 'material images to suggest immaterial relations'. Without metaphor, there would be no bridge to cross 'from the minor truth of the seen to the major truth of the unseen'. Metaphor as the 'chief device' of the Chinese character and the hieroglyph 'is at once the substance of nature and of language. Poetry only does consciously what the primitive races did unconsciously'.[44] Hence:

> Our ancestors built the accumulations of metaphor into structures of language and into systems of thought. Languages today are thin and cold because we think less and less into them. We are forced, for the sake of quickness and sharpness, to file down each word to its narrowest edge of meaning. Nature would seem to have become less like a paradise and more like a factory. We are content to accept the vulgar misuse of the moment.[45]

Fenollosa views the Western script as removed from nature and the present moment as it abandons metaphor and the visual aspect of representation. For him, poetry brings the visual and metaphorical back into representation so that 'the moment' is no longer misused.

Klee draws on the hieroglyph in his painting <u>Arab Song</u> which is illustrated on the cover of Paulin's <u>Walking a Line</u>.[46] Here, the vocal fabric of song, the letters in the painting and the title of the poem infiltrate the visual representation of the picture. Poems and books are often written or drawn into Klee's paintings, and the inverse of this is at work when Paulin's poems refer to Klee's paintings and draw on the visual representation of the hieroglyph. Paulin's use of the hieroglyph takes us back to Fenollosa's argument that these letters spoke with both the vividness of painting and the mobility of sounds.[47] The art critic Rainer Crone notes: 'By letting the book be materialized as painting, and by submitting the painting to the textuality of the book, Klee blurs the boundaries between categories of cultural representation: image and word, nature and culture, thing and representation'.[48] The blurring of boundaries creates a space that cannot be translated between text and image. This gap between the visual and the audible represents a slippage between our powers of perception.

In their book <u>Paul Klee: Legends of the Sign</u> (1991), Rainer Crone and Joseph Leo Koerner slip out of their field of art theory into the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, arguing that there is a tension in Klee's work between the impossible desire of the iconic for the linguistic sign.[49] In a comparable way, drawing on Klee's art, Paulin's poetry creates a tension between the impossible desire of the linguistic for the iconic. Paulin also uses hieroglyphics in his poetry so that iconic and vocal merge, while signifier and signified infiltrate one another. Crone says of Klee's hieroglyphic paintings: 'words and images do not cohere: they cancel one another out in a way that we may never truly fathom'.[50] In <u>Walking a</u>

Line, Paulin's use of the hieroglyph as a title for one his poems presents a comparable lack of coherence between the vocal and visual.

Additionally, Arab Song which is printed on the cover of Walking a Line is a picture where a Middle Eastern face and mouth are composed out of thin lines, enclosed by borderlines and woven into these borders are hieroglyphic symbols; it is a 'song' without words. Paulin teases us with Klee's portrait of the human figure enclosed by lines where the boundaries and edges existing in the picture combine with the meaningful yet meaningless hieroglyphic text that is woven into the picture. The title, Arab Song, exposes the gap between East and West, and the vocal and visual. Confronted with Paulin's title page, the reader perceives the artistic lines of Klee's picture. S/he turns the page and reads the poetic lines of Paulin's collection where the lines of each letter and combination of words are strung together like Paulin's hieroglyphics hung on a line like washing which is imagined in his poem শ্ম ৠ[`ী`] (p.25). In Klee's art and Paulin's poetry images and words are put together to play on our perception of things so as to change the way we see. Klee writes: 'In its present shape it is not the only possible world'.[51] The hieroglyph, the artistic/poetic line, and the visual and conceptual lines which are drawn by both artist and poet represent the 'edge of things'. That is, the 'existentially not quite placeable', a subliminal or sublime borderland at the limits of perception, beyond representation and translation.[52] This is another possible world or representational space.

Paulin sends us on a walk or wild-goose-chase along the lines inscribed in his own text; while Klee's picture forms ancient hieroglyphics from an older civilization that, according to the different arguments of Edward Said and Robert Young, has been

traditionally presented in European culture and Orientalist discourse as radically

other to the European sense of self.[53] To cross the lines is to move onto the other

side and into the unknown:

> walking towards the bridge
>
> not the dream of becoming
> nor the dream of belonging
> but the dream of Being   (p.28)

One cannot really <u>be</u> whilst constrained within the lines of language since the

individual is written before the individual writes. The poet paces the lines looking

how to cross the bridge to the other side; s/he is both freed and imprisoned within

her/his script. The metaphor of crossing over the bridge to the other side suggests

that 'the dream of Being' or representing oneself, becomes a problem of regarding

alterity or the otherness in one's self and in others. What follows is an exploration

of how these issues are played out further within Paulin's poems.

Paulin, Partition and Ideological Divisions

Paulin comments: 'If you grow-up in a society that goes to the edge - the edge of

civil war - you are constantly thinking about it. That is, how ideological divisions

exist between people'.[54] A preoccupation with lines and border crossings is

introduced in Paulin's earlier poem, 'Line on the Grass', from <u>The Strange Museum</u>

(1980). This poem was written fourteen years before <u>Walking a Line</u> and it alludes

to the territorial Partition between the North and South of Ireland. The line in the

grass is evocative of a severed landscape wounded by politics and ideological lines

existing in the minds of individuals. The poem is a precursor to some of the issues

both confronted and avoided in <u>Walking a Line</u> as it demonstrates an interest in

ideological, territorial and artistic lines that are introduced in the later poetry:

> Shadow in the mind,
> this is its territory;
> a sweep of broken land
> between two guarded towns.[55]

Stanza one describes the borderline of Partition which is associated with an in-

between realm and a shadowy place. Although at points of the border there is no

visible Partition, it is still felt and it is known as an ideological and unconscious line

that exists for people in Ireland. It is also a place that is paradoxically unplaceable

or out of place as a no man's land existing between territories. The Partition is

conveyed as 'broken ground' which is snapped in half, fragmented, weak and

interrupted. The imagery of Partition is complemented by the lines which are short

and of roughly three feet so that many of the six foot statements are severed or

broken in half. The poetic voice is clipped, precise, as 'dull' as the light and as non-

committal as the in-between neutrality of the border-town which is on neither one

side nor the other.[56]

Stanza two testifies to how nothing is happening here: the tank engine is rusting

and the 'long grass' has not been cut. Stanza three notes how this 'could be

anytime' in history since the landscape is 'fixed', time is interrupted and stands still.

The 'fixed' images of the poem suggest that the scene is like a painting and the poem

becomes a portrait representing a borderland or in-between state. The place in the

poem is presented in terms of a historical vacuum as this 'could be anytime'. At a

historical level, the Boundary Commission was not meant to be permanent but the

border has become a frozen marker of a failure of politics around which people

attempt to go about their daily business. Hence, in the poem both the time and place

are presented as unhinged or frozen which, in the terms of Gilles Deleuze, has the

effect of a revolution in the relation between the temporal and the spatial. The

'anytime' of the poem is imagined in terms of fixity, and in this way, the place of the

poem becomes ahistorical or a place captured for a moment that is timeless because

it does not move. The place of the poem operates in an historical vacuum in which

people move on bicycles, yet 'stiffly' as though they are trapped within a tableau or

a no-place where time cannot move forward.

On the one hand, the territory in the poem is a fixed landscape locked in a certain

failure of history called the Partition. On the other hand, the landscape becomes

locked into another fixity which is the frame of the poem itself where history is also

made to stand still. The place of the poem lives life with the lid on and so human

figures are visibly changed; as in the paintings of L.S Lowry, they appear as

mechanical silhouettes or shadows on the horizon of an Imagist landscape. The

poem introduces a fascination with the pictorial and audible aspects of poetry as it is

presents a static scene like a painting that is 'scanned' by the watching poet. 'Line

on the Grass' is a poem on the edge that initiates an exploration of political and

aesthetic borders, the limits of vision and representation, and the fixity of a time in

the peculiar atmosphere of a no man's land.

At the Borders of Conception

Paulin's poem 'What's Natural' from <u>Walking a Line</u> leaves concerns with territorial

lines and plays with the different meanings of walking a line on the edge of delirium,

communication, abstraction and desire:

> Taking a line out for a walk
> ought to seem - well
> second nature
> like the way you laugh or talk
> - though both speech and laughter
> have to be learned
> inside a culture   (p.55)

The opening of the poem appears to be frank and straightforward, yet the line break

between 'walk' and 'ought', and the disruption of the dash suggests discontinuity

and artificiality as the lines do not flow. Just as 'you laugh or talk' the line is

'learned/ inside a culture'. Klee's artworks might seem spontaneous but as indicated

in his notebooks, they are painstaking, part of the modernist culture in which he

paints, and related to his theories and lectures that he presented to students at the

Bauhaus. Artistic and poetic lines are learned; they are a craft or skill. The speaker

turns to the example of the artist or draftsman whose pencil line takes a lead or

direction of its own yet is held on a lead like an animal that must be tamed.

   The speaker imagines 'somewhere between a pun/ and a tautology'. The pun and

tautology are opposed: a pun works by using a word which has different meanings,

whereas a tautology works by using different words for the same meaning or idea.

To be 'between' them is to fall into a slippage of meaning or between the lines,

creating an aporia, that which cannot be conceived, the incoherent or nonsense. Existing between the lines connects with psychoanalytic theories of the subliminal, and reading in the gaps and the silences. This is also related to Klee's artistic exploration of the sublime as representing the unrepresentable, that which is on the edge or at the borders of conception. This is comparable with the 'shadow of the mind' from 'Line on the Grass' which exists in the unconscious or at the limits of the self. The poetry like Klee's artwork seeks to go to the 'dangerous edge of things'. But what lies at this edge of delirium?

The sun setting over the horizon like Klee's circular Tunisian sun, goes down and interrupts the black line of the horizon with its dazzling colour. The word 'yolky' imagines the sun as an egg which has associations with fertility, life-giving warmth and creation. In 'A Last Gesture' (p.77), 'yolky' is associated with vaginal fluids and sexual intercourse. The words 'splittery splattery' signal a disruption in the discourse of the poem since they are not 'real' or standardized words, and they suggest an alternative language or reality is available to the painter/poet. This is a language associated with yolky feminine fluids, with the female body, what is more life giving, sensual and fruitful which is connected with European representations of the East.[57] The yolky feminine sun disrupts the line that is held on the lead of a certain culture with the promise of 'dawn' or a fresher perception centred around images of bodily functions.

For instance, the 'wheeze and piss/ of dawn' suggests a fleshy or even asthmatic dawn which puffs and blows as it gets up in the morning. The words 'wheeze and piss' are like 'splittery' and 'splattery' in that they smudge the clarity of the visual

picture of the poem suggesting a 'vagueness' which deviates from the accuracy of

the line which in Klee's words is: 'the pure representation of the linear element'.[58]

There is a sense of boundaries breaking down and seeping over in the poem.

'Splittery/ splattery' and 'piss' are words that evoke the fluid with the effect of

smudging the visual clarity of the picture painted by Paulin's poem. The line on the

grass is no longer quite so clear cut and the sun 'chuck[s] itself' unceremoniously

over the horizon, intruding on the carefully measured line. Moreover, the form of

the poem is not end-stopped or full-stopped, and there is a sense of the line not

halting but continuing, running away with itself lead-less or of meaning running

beyond the poem. The poem reads as a sentence that does not stop, leading into a

dawn which is signalled at the 'end' of the poem with the effect of attempting to

acknowledge a beyond of discourse.

Lecercle writes of a delirious beyond in relation to poetry:

> Instead of a linguistic system, we have the unreliable and unpredictable workings of
> poetic language: not a pack of rules, a system, but a strange growth, a machine with
> a dynamic of its own. Délire is made up of metaphors, and yet nothing in it is
> metaphorical; it must all be taken literally. As a consequence, frontiers are blurred,
> and délire reigns everywhere.[59]

Lecercle argues that poetry can be delirious when it does not operate predictably. He

comments that like poetry, délire is made of metaphors that must be taken literally.

This echoes the beginning of Anti-Oedipus (1984) where Deleuze and Guattari insist

that their argument is 'not mere metaphors'.[60] Fenollosa was concerned with the loss

of a more metaphorical mode of representation which was offered for him by the

Chinese character. To deny the metaphorical as being somehow less empirical, as

offering evidence that is suspect, is to forget the délire operating at the borders of expression, perception and experience; the way in which language and thinking operates by metaphor, analogy and association; and how sense is haunted by non-sense.

Paulin's poem 'Almost There' (p.21) imagines a blurred edge where he attempts to chart a frontier between sense and nonsense, rational and irrational realms, vocalizing the beyond in poetry or getting to something which is difficult to articulate. Writing it out a 'couple more times' might have meant the speaker had 'cracked the thing' instead, 'there's a kind of glitch in what you're saying'. The poem presents us with images of the crack as a thin line splitting a surface, fracturing something or creating a gap in-between, a place of délire along which the poet treads in Walking a Line. The crack in poetic language is accompanied by the word 'glitch' which is 'a sudden irregularity or malfunction (of equipment)'.[61] At this point in the poem, the line breaks off giving a sense of speech being fractured by 'the speechjolt' which is associated with movement or 'traveling through darkness and moisture', as a fluid excess. Once more, this kind of image creates a sense of the inarticulable, while 'darkness and moisture' evoke a 'feminine', dark and moist realm; both a lack and an excess that evades definition.

The effects of 'What's Natural' and 'Almost There' are comparable with Jean-François Lyotard's description of the fracture within the sublime which goes back to Romantic discussion of the sublime in Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and his Critique of Judgement:[62]

... the faculty of presentation, the imagination, fails to provide a representation corresponding to the Idea. This failure of expression gives rise to a pain, a kind of cleavage within the Subject between what can be conceived and what can be imagined or presented ... This dislocation of faculties among themselves gives rise to an extreme tension ... At the edge of the break, infinity, or the absoluteness of the Idea can be revealed in what Kant calls a negative presentation, or even a non-presentation.[63]

This 'cleavage' corresponds with Lecercle's notion of délire and Paulin's 'glitch', where there is a 'dislocation of faculties among themselves' giving 'rise to an extreme tension' 'between what can be conceived and what can be imagined or presented'. According to Lyotard, the sublime is the relation between the representable and the conceivable. The sublime takes place 'when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept ... These are Ideas of which no presentation is possible. [Modern art presents] ... the fact that the unpresentable exists'.[64]

The art critic Herbert Read comments that Klee's 'conceptual imagination is capable of creating new worlds, or organic variations of the existing world. But these concepts can only be expressed in the concrete terms of line ... he was inspired by conceptual rather than perceptual processes'.[65] Paulin's poem 'That's It' plays with both conceptual and perceptual processes. The poem begins with a scene composed of light, line and clarity, yet the indefinable and ambivalent quickly seeps into the poem as it opens with the word 'Maybe':

> Maybe because the light's so marine clear
> in this new room
> - this unexpected studio
> maybe that's why the chest of drawers
> placed in the dormer window
> has to be stated like a proposition   (p.104)

The 'studio' is like a painting and a room in which the poetic speaker finds himself. The scene is set with a 'man lying on a mattress' regarding a 'chest of drawers' like 'a big bold drawing/ that overpowers and oppresses him'. The chest of drawers placed in front of light from a window would exist as a silhouette, heavily outlined in black as in some of Klee's paintings. But 'the chest is neither one thing nor the other/ for it belongs no more than he does'. The subject is objectified, sitting in the space between reality and dream or in a situation where the objects challenge the subject's sense of self so that 'the chest is neither one thing nor the other/ for it belongs no more than he does'. The stripped pine chest of drawers 'dipped in an acid bath' also constitutes the furnishings of a middle class home and compares with the 'middleclass' 'novel' that 'tries to make a bit of a splash' (p.105). The man dips into it like the novel yet feels unhomely within the proximity of this 'prose garment' or 'social skin'.

In the second stanza the chest is transformed, losing any sense of reality. In the mode of philosophy lecturer, the speaker asks: '- supposing I treat that chest as a novel/ as a complete fiction?'. Comparably, Klee writes:

> ... the artist must be forgiven if he regards the present state of outward appearances in his own particular world as accidentally fixed in time and space. And as altogether inadequate compared with his penetrating vision and intense depth of feeling.[66]

Klee sees the world as accidentally fixed in time and space; an ahistorical world existing in a static 'anytime' which is rather like the time and space imagined in 'Line on the Grass'. This 'anytime' or 'any place' is inadequate when set against Klee's vision which takes a critical stance towards the ideologies of a world of

'outward appearances'. This world is, in Paulin's words, a 'complete fiction', a place of myth rather than a real time. In 'That's It', the book or fictional world come into the picture when the chest of drawers is compared with a novel. As in Klee's art, the speaker takes an imaginative leap into unreality when he treats the chest before him as a fiction. As with the novel, this unreality is still contained within 'its social space' and prose retains a 'social skin'. In the poem there is no outside history yet there is a délire that haunts the language of the poem; a zwischenwelt at the borders of perception and representation that questions the speaker's vision, and his grip on the temporal and the spatial.

According to the logic of the speaker's questions:

> all of which says only
> that though I may be lying on a mattress
> really I'm afloat
> on a pool of light and illusion
> yes light
> and yes illusion.

In his notebooks Paul Klee writes:

> Within the will to abstraction something appears that has nothing to do with objective reality. Free association supplies a key to the fantasy and formal significance of the picture. Yet, this world of illusion is credible. It is situated in the realm of the human. Memory, digested experience, yields pictorial associations. What is new here is the way the real and the abstract coincide or appear together.[67]

In 'That's It' a similar effect is at work when the day dreaming speaker floats off into an imaginative realm of 'memory' that 'yields pictorial associations' or a 'world of illusion', forcing 'the real and the abstract' to 'coincide or appear together'. The speaker exists in what seems to be a lidless room; an attic 'above a city'. The 'pool' suggests liquidity, fluidity, a state of being indeterminate rather than solid and where

everything runs freely. The word 'pool' can also mean to establish a common fund where there are no categories or boundaries as borders are transgressed. Illusion is also associated with delusion, a deceptive impression on the senses or with nonsense. The word 'afloat' suggests: moving above, becoming adrift, to bear upon a surface or gliding effortlessly on the brim of things which takes us back to Heaney's essay on Robert Frost, where he talks of an excess of meaning brimming over that provides impetus for questioning the way we see. In Paulin's poem, light is a cause of visibility or dawn; it is associated with moral, spiritual, intellectual knowledge or revelation on the dangerous edge of things.

The poem takes an imaginative leap beyond the social space, and beyond the functional and 'middleclass' prose that is presented in the novel. So the poetic speaker experiences lightness or weightlessness; he is not heavy or entirely grounded in ideological reality, imprisoned or anchored by the black border which surrounds the chest of drawers and encompasses the figure in Arab Song. Instead, the speaker takes flight into a world of illusion, a delirious space where the 'light's so marine clear' and he becomes somehow more in touch with the reality of the moment. The inscription on Klee's grave in the Schosshalden cemetery would be a pertinent epigraph for the man lying on the bed in 'That's It':

> I CANNOT BE GRASPED IN THE HERE AND NOW
> FOR I LIVE JUST AS WELL WITH THE DEAD
> AS WITH THE UNBORN
> SOMEWHAT CLOSER TO THE HEART
>   OF CREATION THAN USUAL
> BUT FAR FROM CLOSE ENOUGH

In relation to this aesthetic concern with seeing things afresh and his critical awareness of the historical moment, Klee claims that '[a]rt does not reproduce the visible - it makes visible'.[68] The washed vision of Paulin's final poem with its preoccupation with seeing things through the eyes of '- a man in the process of deciding/ that he's begun to make old bones', is similar to Heaney in Seeing Things where he waited until he was nearly fifty to 'credit marvels'. The effects of 'Almost There' are comparable with one of Klee's last paintings in 1940 before his death which was untitled but is catalogued as 'Still Life'. The bottom left of this painting depicts Jacob and the angel wrestling, yet strangely uniting and becoming one. The angels are pilots between the two worlds, both 'real', which everyone must experience. Wrapped in their struggle, the man and the angel turn to face the objects of what we know as the real world. These have form but no meaning. The 'real' is unreal, the unreal is 'real'.[69] This is similar to the way in which Heaney brings together two different realities in 'Lightenings' which was discussed in the last chapter; where the monks at Clonmacnoise were presented with the vision of the ship in the air, while the sailors in the ship saw the praying monks, so that two different realities collided and were crossed. As Heaney and Paulin leave the ground of Irish politics, my argument is that their drifting away from the national question does not mean that their poetry is apolitical. The following discussion outlines the ways in which Paulin's journey into less obviously political realms still has a politics which changes the way in which his positioning as an 'underground resistance fighter' can be understood.

Questioning the Real

In his essay 'Note on the Meaning of "Post - "', Lyotard celebrates this characteristic

of questioning ideological reality which he finds in the avant-garde artists Cézanne,

Picasso, Delaunay, Kandinsky and Klee, who investigate the assumptions implicit in

modernity. Lyotard condemns rational Enlightenment ideologies claiming that for

all the promise of liberty and a world of citizenship these developments have made

possible a world of war and totalitarianism.[70] For Lyotard, enlightened ideologies of

human emancipation can become twisted into totalitarian narratives that operate by

force:

> We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the
> reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the
> communicable of experience. Under the general demand for slackening and
> appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of desire for a return of terror, for the
> realization of the fantasy to revive reality. The answer is: let us wage war on
> totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences to
> save the honour of the name.[71]

Both Paul Klee's paintings and Tom Paulin's poetry wage war on totality and bear

witness to the unrepresentable in the form of the nonsense of the hieroglyph, and the

frontier of délire which haunts language and representation. This is not simply an

aesthetic practice. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in Anti-Oedipus (1984): 'Au

fond de la société, le délire'.[72] Lecercle notices how délire is historical, political and

racial; it is neither divorced from the world, nor outside history, since there is no

outside, rather, it is what constitutes the social.[73]

It is significant that Paulin and Klee are artists who lived in a context of war.

Paulin co-founded the 'Field Day Theatre Company' with other artists who hoped to

establish a more positive artistic identity and culture, for themselves and the society

in which they worked. Paul Klee was part of the Bauhaus in Weimar which was

broken-up by the Nazis. He wrote: 'The more fearful this world becomes, the more

abstract its art'.[74] Klee painted imaginative and colourful pieces at a time of war and

within a context where he felt that these were 'unsettled times' which had 'brought

chaos and confusion'.[75] For Klee, the more the world was dictated by fearful politics

the more he sought to remove his art from this reality into something

unrecognizable. Comparably, in the final poem of Walking a Line, Paulin's speaker

sees things differently, moving beyond preoccupations with the Irish landscape, the

'Line on the Grass', or the ideological realities in the North of Ireland.

This move away from a context of war is not particular only to Paulin.

Contemporary poets from various communities in the North of Ireland, such as

Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon and Medbh McGuckian, have in their different ways

produced poetry which deals less overtly with the devastation of war. The speaker

in Muldoon's poem 'Lunch with Pancho Villa' (1977) satirically questions the

relevance of writing about 'stars and horses, pigs and trees' when 'around you/

People are getting themselves killed/ Left, right and centre'.[76] Without forgetting

Edna Longley's urge to see poets from the North of Ireland as individuals with

differing politics and poetic practices, what all hold in common is their creation of

an artistic world which is less preoccupied with the carnage of sectarian violence and

attempts to view an alternative reality, or a different way of seeing things as

providing impetus for a better present.[77] Paulin's recent poetry holds within it the

seeds of a subtle aesthetic practice which can be connected with the work of Klee,

and this is comparable with concepts outlined in Lyotard's essay 'The Sublime and

the Avant-Garde'. This alternative view of the world is alluded to by Lyotard in his

appraisal of Klee's art: 'Art does not imitate nature, it creates a world apart, eine

zwischenwelt, as Paul Klee will say, eine nebenwelt ...'[78] Lyotard connects the

romantic notion of the sublime, the avant-garde and Paul Klee with the postmodern,

and with a zwischenwelt (a universe between) and nebenwelt (a universe apart).

Fighting against the odds and in acts of self-preservation, Klee and Paulin choose

to turn away from the images of destruction around them. Both artists become exiles

from what in 'जम अजी' Paulin calls 'a world that doesn't add up' (p.29) where

```
all we can do
is try to avoid
the heavy the hard
and the poisonous winds
those who try to confront them
are doomed to disappointment        ('On the Windfarm', pp.50-1).
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Avoiding the 'poisonous winds' or the destructive storms of political violence, the

artists attempt to nurture their art in a more sheltered realm or nebenwelt, a utopian

space where their work will not wither.

Although Walking a Line (1994) signals a move away from the overtly political

issues of Liberty Tree (1983) and Fivemiletown (1987), this does not mean that the

poetry necessarily becomes a-political or inhabits a transcendent and vacuous

utopianism with little bearing on reality. Paulin's man in 'That's It' has the capacity

to metamorphose reality and his place in the world. The poem charts the revelation

that language can transform and break across conceptual frontiers. The use of

hieroglyphs from other cultures, as represented in <u>Arab Song</u> and 'श्रम् अजीर',

demonstrates an awareness of other cultures beyond Western thought. In addition,

Paulin's final poem 'That's It' is positioned at the limits of foundational thought as

the speaker floats without base, support or even quaking sod, as though seated upon

a magic carpet in a pool of light and illusion. In this way, foundational philosophies

can be rejected since they connect with the symptoms of an imperialist cast of mind

which draws up lines of apartheid or ideological frontiers in order to legitimize one

version of reality at the expense of others.[79] Paulin's delirious poems in <u>Walking a</u>

<u>Line</u> refuse such a containment.

In this way, Paulin's poetic representation of 'the dangerous edge of things' in his

poetry explores the boundaries between the linguistic and iconic, experiencing the

délire of non-sense. The denial of foundational thought or this strategy of the

strategy-less need not be 'apolitical', and there is a point where postmodern and

post-colonial political theories meet:

> When the north Western tip of Europe designated itself as the centre of
> 'enlightenment' in the eighteenth century, it did so in the secure knowledge that an
> 'unenlightened periphery' was thereby constructed ... The postmodern, however, is
> deeply suspicious of such a 'universal history' ... It does what the periphery has
> always silently and powerlessly done: it decentres the centre.[80]

Beginning with the cover illustration of <u>Arab Song</u>, <u>Walking a Line</u> teeters on the

'dangerous edge of things', exploring the periphery of aesthetic borderlines or

borderlands. Paulin is a poet who grew-up in the sectarian climate of one of the last

remaining British colonies; the effects of his poetry as it challenges territorial,

ideological and representative frontiers, while residing on the 'dangerous edge of things', are symptomatic of a post-colonial 'deconstructionist argument'. Walking a Line undermines the credibility of boundaries and borders in an act of imaginative transgression that questions the very foundations of representation.

Of course, the relationship between the aesthetic and political may be uneasy or uncomfortable. Yet, it is important to notice how there is no great divide between the aesthetic, political and historical, since both politics and history are also aestheticized. Paulin's move into the aesthetic world of Paul Klee is haunted by a history of imperial Germany and the Bauhaus group who were murdered by the Nazis. This is a reminder of how fascism acknowledged that representation is a powerful political tool and sought to censor certain artists whose work challenged fascist politics. In this way, Paulin's use of Klee bears testimony to the view that politics and art are entwined, and that the artist is a social being. Although both Klee and Paulin take a critical stance away from received ideologies to provide different visions of reality, neither are cut off from the world.

An example of this is found at the very beginning of Walking a Line in the first poem entitled 'Klee/Clover'. "Nightwatch after nightwatch/ Paul Klee endured 'horribly boring guard duty'" as an Infantry Reservist at the Recruits' Depot in 1916.[81] Here, he 'varnished wings/ and stencilled numbers/ next to gothic insignia' on the airplanes of German pilots during the First World War. The artist was used to produce works of art in accordance with the laws of the state,

> and every morning
> outside the Zeppelin hanger

    there was a drill then a speech
    tacked with junk formulas   (p.1)

In the midst of the 'Flying School 5 (Bavaria)', Klee 'wrote home to Lily', his

wife, and protectively disregards any of the information presented to readers in the

first stanza. Instead, he writes mostly of the 'spring weather' and his garden that he

tends on the airfield. Klee takes a subversive role apart from the received ideologies

of war and remains distanced from his prescribed place in a grey uniform at

Landshut. The poem remembers how in the midst of war, Klee created artwork from

the canvas of crashed airplanes and made the airfield at Landshut 'beautiful' by

planting a 'garden/ between the second and third runways'. The painter took a step

away from the received politics of the state as he chose to go about his own business:

    each time a plane crashed
    -    and that happened quite often
    he cut squares of canvas
    from the wings and fuselage
    he never said why
    but every smashed biplane
    looked daft or ridiculous
    halfjoky and untrue
    -    maybe the pilots annoyed him?
    Those unlovely aristos
    who never knew they were flying
    primed blank canvases
    into his beautiful airfield   (p.2)

The poem plays with ways of seeing and with notions of authenticity. The world of

the pilots is 'ridiculous' and 'untrue', and as jingoistic as the 'drill speech' each day.

The aristocratic pilots are unaware of the 'lippy dislike' of Klee, the 'first-class'

'private' who, in his marginalized place as reluctant soldier, continues his role as

artist and refuses to swallow the dogmas of war. During his time at Landshut, Klee

did not avoid the overtly political and disappear into an aesthetic realm all of his own. Rather, in his refusal to allow the war to overcome his way of seeing the world, he undermined the politics of the day and took a sceptical and critical stance apart in relation to the war around him.

Alluding to the aesthetic realms of the avant-garde artist Paul Klee by a writer from the North of Ireland who has lived through a history of civil war and Partition, it is difficult to ignore how Paulin's obsession with different kinds of lines and edges has a political dimension as he questions ways of seeing and how we choose to represent. Walking a Line denies the neat divisions drawn up between poetry and politics, the lyrical poet and the politically engaged poet. Questioning ways of seeing things and the way things are represented at an aesthetic level, implicitly challenges how we see and represent at a political level. An imperial centre which dictates governing ideologies or how we see, may be undermined by the periphery or the poet, who paces the borderlands of aesthetic and political representation with the effect of destabilizing the real, what we take to be true and how we represent ourselves to ourselves. In this sense, Walking a Line challenges the foundations of Western and imperialist political representation and this is symbolized by Paulin's poignant choice of Arab Song to grace the front cover of his collection – a painting where several worlds, several ways of seeing and several modes of representation collide with one another.

In conclusion, the relationship between the avant-garde artwork of Klee and writing by a poet from the North of Ireland is intricate. What is interesting is how the avant-garde painting of Paul Klee who worked in the tyranny of imperial

Germany during the First and Second World Wars, questioned established and

centralized beliefs, and experimented with different methods of representation. The

poetic effects of Walking a Line are comparable with Klee's diaries and art work as

the collection takes an imaginative dive off the ground of Paulin's uneasy secular

republic, into deeper and more fruitful seas where meaning becomes fluid, travelling

splittery-splattery towards newer horizons and interrupting the tyranny of ideological

lines. Reading the outspoken essays in Writing to the Moment (1996) or sitting

through his critical disaffection on The Late Review, it would be impossible to

declare that Paulin the essayist has no firm position. However, unlike his critical

essays, Paulin's poetry 'stands in a place whose borders are circumscribed', refusing

'a stable ground'.[82] Inspired by the attractive figure of Paul Klee, Paulin the poet

seeks to open up conceptual and perceptual spaces, experimenting with the way we

see and choose to represent, and questioning the politics of representation and the

representation of politics. The destabilizing and edgy aspects of his poetry are

comparable with the deterritorializing vision of Heaney in Seeing Things, with the

effect of changing what we take to be political, and challenging the shaky line that

has been drawn between an aesthetics of privacy and a public politics. Walking a

Line dangerously and deliriously treads at the borders of conception, and this is as

near as Tom Paulin has ever got to flying by the nets of language and nationality.

The next chapter will discuss Paul Muldoon's anti-foundational and playful poems,

asking how far his poetry 'operates in the danger zones of margins and boundaries'

that are evocative of deterritorialization and délire, and questioning what are the

politics and ethics of such a move.

'Notes to Chapter Two'

[1] Tom Paulin, 'Twentieth Century Poetry Lecture', Tuesday 26th November, 1996 at Rutherford College, The University of Kent at Canterbury. Recorded and held at the Templeman Library.

[2] Patricia Craig, 'History and its Retrieval in Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry: Paulin, Montague and Others', Elmer Andrews, ed., Contemporary Irish Poetry: A Collection of Critical Essays, (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp.1-25. George Watson, 'An Uncomfortable, Spikey Poet', Irish Literary Supplement, Fall, 1988, Vol.7, No.2. Kathleen Jamie, 'Reggae and the crack: Writing to the Moment', The Independent, Sunday 24th November, 1996, 'Sunday Review'.

[3] Elmer Andrews, 'Tom Paulin: Underground Resistance Fighter', Poetry in Contemporary Irish Literature, ed., Michael Kenneally, (Bucks: Gerrards Cross, 1995), p.334.

[4] Paulin, Writing to the Moment, (London: Faber, 1996), pp.104-5.

[5] Ibid., pp.279, 277.

[6] Clair Wills, 'Tom Paulin: Enlightening the Tribe', Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry, (Oxford: University Press, 1993), p.122.

[7] Ibid., p.22.

[8] Ibid., pp.121-57. Cf. Isaiah Berlin, The Eighteenth Century Philosophers: the Age of Enlightenment, (New York: Mentor, 1956, 1962), p.28.

[9] Paulin, Ireland and the English Crisis, 'Introduction', pp.17-18.

[10] Wills, Improprieties, p.124.

[11] Ibid., p.137.

[12] Ibid., p.142.

[13] Ibid., p.143.

[14] Paulin, William Hazlitt: T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures, delivered at Kent, December 1996, published by Faber. Also involved in this eighteenth century debate over sense and sensibility were Frances Hutcheson, Friedrich Schiller, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen.

[15] Sarah Fulford, an interview with Tom Paulin, Tuesday 26th November, 1996 at Eliot College, UKC. Cf. 'The Strangeness of the Script', Irish Studies Review, No.19, pp.2-5 and 'Appendices One'.

[16] Andrews, Poetry in Contemporary Irish Literature, p.338.

[17] Andrews, ed., 'Introduction', Contemporary Irish Poetry: A Collection of Critical Essays, (London: Macmillan, 1992), p.21.

[18] Paulin, Fivemiletown, (London: Faber, 1987), p.54.

[19] Andrews, Poetry in Contemporary Irish Literature, p.339.

[20] Paulin, 'Twentieth Century Poetry Lecture', The University of Kent.

[21] Paul Klee, On Modern Art With An Introduction By Herbert Read, (London: Faber, n.d.), p.21.

[22] Jean-François Lyotard, Discours, Figure, (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1971, 1985), p.225. My translation: 'The almost direct transcription of fantasy ... [is] the delirium of a primal process, capable of doing violence to all writing and representation'.

[23] Ibid., p.233. My translation: 'As a possible world, the work does not lose its look of being from elsewhere, despite its reality. Creativity exceeds the creator.'

[24] Ibid., p.9. Cf. Peter Dews, 'The Letter and the Line: Discourse and its other in Lyotard', Diacritics, Fall 1984, Vol.14, No.3, pp.40-49.

[25] Lyotard, Discours, Figure, p.118. Trans. Dews, p.42.

[26] Ibid., pp.42, 129. Trans. Dews, pp.42-3.

[27] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Le Visible et L'Invisible, (Paris: Gallimard/TEL, 1981). Discours, Figure, p.239. Trans. Dews, p.46. Julia Kristeva, 'Revolution in Poetic Language', The Kristeva Reader, ed., Toril Moi, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

[28] Discours, Figure ,p.384. Trans. Dews, p.48.

[29] Dews, p.49.

[30] Robert Fisher, trans., & Theodore Reff, ed., Klee, (New York: Tudor, 1967), p.3.

[31] Paul Klee, Tagebüche, ed., Felix Klee, (Cologne: Dumont Schauberg, 1957). My translation: 'With Morgenstern's Galgenlieder let the year be ended'.

[32] Christian Morgenstern, Galgenlieder, Palmstrom, (Berlin, 1905). My translation: 'Let the molecules career/ leave them to their own confections/ Never fuss about corrections/ Ecstasies thou shalt revere'.

[33] E.H. Gombrich, 'Image and Word in twentieth century art', Word and Image, Vol.1, No.3, July-Sept, 1985, p.230.

[34] Jean-Jacques Lecercle, Philosophy through the Looking Glass: Language, nonsense, desire, Problems of Modern European Thought, (Essex: Hutchinson, 1985), p.6.

[35] Ibid., p.161.

[36] Ibid., pp.6-7.

[37] Christopher Butler, Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900-1916, (Oxford: University Press, 1994, 1996), p.76.

[38] Rainer Crone & Joseph Leo Koerner, Paul Klee: Legends of the Sign, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p.65.

[39] Maurice Blanchot, ''The Absence of the Book', L'Entretien infini (1969), translated in The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Essays, trans. Lydia David, (Barrytown N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1981), p.146. p.103. Cf. Crone & Koerner, p.65.

[40] Tom Paulin, Fivemiletown,, p.19.

[41] Freidrich Schlegel, Letter of April 27, 1825, Briefe an seinen Bruder August Wilhelm, ed., Oskar F. Walzel, (Berlin: Speyer and Peters, 1890), p.623. See also Crone & Koerner, vii.

[42] Ernest Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, ed., Ezra Pound, (California: City Lights books, 1936), p.9.

[43] Ibid., p.13.

[44] Ibid., pp.22-23.

[45] Ibid., p.24.

[46] Cf. 'Appendices Two' for print of 'Arab Song' (1932) taken from The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. and painted after Klee's visit to Tunisia (1914). This provides the cover for Paulin's Walking a Line. All further references are to this edition and are cited in parentheses in the text.

[47] Fenollosa, p.9.

[48] Crone & Koerner, x.

[49] Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans., Wade Baskin, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

[50] Crone & Koerner, p.38.

[51] Klee, On Modern Art, p.45.

[52] Paulin, 'Twentieth Century Poetry Lecture', The University of Kent.

[53] Cf. Edward Said's Orientalism, (London: Penguin, 1985); Robert Young's White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West, (London: Routledge, 1990).

[54] Paulin, 'Twentieth Century Poetry Lecture', The University of Kent.

[55] 'Line on the Grass', Strange Museum, (1980), from Selected Poems 1972-1980, (London: Faber, 1993), p.29.

[56] In 1982, Paulin recorded a reading and discussion of 'Line in the Grass' for Readings, (London: Faber 1994) where he identifies the place of the poem as the border town of Strabane.

[57] Examples of representations of the East as sensual and surrounded by bodily metaphors are found in European representation such as E.M. Forster's A Passage to India and in literature in English by Indian writers such as Amit Chaudhuri in his novel A Strange and Sublime Address, (London: Minerva, 1991). Chaudhuri wrote his PhD on D.H. Lawrence and the body while at Balliol College, Oxford where he was supervised by Tom Paulin.

[58] Klee, On Modern Art, p.53.

[59] Lecercle, p.161.

[60] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, (London: Athlone, 1984), p.3.

[61] The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 9th ed., Della Thompson ed., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p.576.

[62] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans., Norman Kemp Smith, (London: Macmillan, 1929) and Critique of Judgement, trans. J.C. Meredith, (Oxford: University Press, 1952).

[63] Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', Postmodernism: A Reader, (London: Harvester, 1993), ed., Docherty p.250.

[64] Ibid., pp.45, 43.

[65] Klee, On Modern Art, p.5.

[66] Ibid., p.47.

[67] Klee, Notebooks of Paul Klee, Vol.1, (London: 1973), pp.261-2.

[68] Ibid., pp.261-2.

[69] Fisher, p.13.

[70] Jean-François Lyotard, "Note on the Meaning of 'Post - '", Postmodernism: A Reader, ed., Docherty, pp.48, 50.

[71] Lyotard, 'Notes on the Postmodern Debate', trans. Thomas Docherty, Across the Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s, ed., Richard Kearney, (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), p.261.

[72] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, L'Anti-Oedipe, (Paris: Minuit, 1972), p.427. My translation: 'Delirium is at the basis of society'.

[73] Lecercle, p.166.

[74] Fisher, p.9.

[75] Klee, On Modern Art, p.53.

[76] Paul Muldoon, 'Lunch With Pancho Villa', Mules, (1977), New Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), pp.25-7.

[77] Edna Longley, 'Stars and Horses, Pigs and Trees', Crane Bag, 3:2, (1979), pp.54-60.

[78] Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', Postmodernism: A Reader, ed., Docherty, p.249.

[79] Ibid., 'Introduction', p.249.

[80] Ibid., 'Periphery and Postmodernism: Introduction', p.445.

[81] Cf. Klee, Notebooks, 'Landshut 1916', p.327.

[82] Docherty, 'Passages to Postmodern', Kearney, ed., Across the Frontiers, pp.272-5.

CHAPTER THREE

RESISTING CONTAINMENT:
PAUL MULDOON, THE PARTITION AND HYBRIDITY

Two places at once was it, or one place twice?

Paul Muldoon, 'Twice', The Annals of Chile (1994).[1]

Chapters One and Two explored the deterritorializing aspects of the poetry of

Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin with the effect of arguing that their poetry moves

away from original conceptions of what constitutes a national poetry. In the

discussion of Heaney's poetry, deterritorialization was understood in terms of the

tension between earth and air; being grounded and in flight. This chapter builds on

previous debate, taking the argument further by outlining the tension within

Muldoon's poetry between gravity and transcendence. Gravity can be understood in

terms of being grounded; as single or rooted thinking that attracts a body towards the

centre of the earth.[2] It also carries meanings of seriousness and graveness as

opposed to transcendence, which may be thought in terms of hilarity or that which

defies gravity. In this chapter, the imaginative flights undertaken by Heaney and

Paulin shall be compared with the levity of Muldoon, and will be developed here in

terms of comedy and the nonsensical which was introduced by the work of Jean-

Jacques Lecercle in the last chapter. This chapter draws on a selective choice of

poems by Muldoon that thematically relate to issues such as the representation of

identity, doubleness, the anti-prescriptive, levity and transcendence. The poems

have been strategically chosen in order to contest assertions that Muldoon is simply

a postmodern poet whose poetry is merely 'whimsical',[3] and so as to provide a

reading of Muldoon that can be given a political inflection which will think his

doubleness in terms of post-colonial strategies, while once again questioning the

relationship between aesthetics and politics.

Paul Muldoon's statement that he is 'anti-prescriptive' has particular resonance

within the colonial context of poetry from the North of Ireland. In an interview with

Lynn Keller, Muldoon says:

> ... I'm a person who can see some value in a great many of the theories that come
> floating by. What I resist very strenuously is the superimposing of any particular
> world picture, any kind of ism, that insists on everything falling into place very
> neatly –[4]

Rather like his 'Hedgehog' from New Weather (1973) who '[s]hares its secret with

no one',[5] Muldoon will not provide straight answers and he has a prickly distrust of

'any particular world picture' that claims itself as authentic.

Muldoon moved to the United States in 1987 and his subsequent position away

from Ireland and the obscurity of the public statement of his work has led Clair

Wills in Improprieties (1993) to notice how responses to Muldoon's work tend to

focus on his 'characteristic enigmatic refusal to take up any public position',

implying that his poetry avoids addressing the larger political situation of Ireland.[6]

Muldoon's 'anti-prescriptive' and ironic pose often resides in-between two opposing

views so that there always seem to be two Muldoons, or a Muldoon who is in two

places at once and has it both ways. This writing strategy is connected with anti-

foundational thought and double-coding whereby two often opposing positions are

held in tension. The 'anti-prescriptive' and the 'anti-foundational' refuse singular

governing laws or principles, and operate in terms of a dis-position or displacement

where one frame of thinking moves to another, and there is no firm ground on which

to stand. Muldoon's doubleness can be understood in terms of deterritorialization

whereby the poetic speaker works against the foundational and lays no claims to any

singular position. It may also be developed in relation to theorization of hybridity.

The intention of this chapter is to explore the displacement, dis-positions and double

'I' in Muldoon's poems so as to ask what effects these have on the representation of

identity.

Clair Wills notices how unlike Heaney, who took part in Civil Rights marches in

his younger days, Muldoon's adolescence was overshadowed by the beginning of

the Troubles, perhaps fostering a feeling of political impotence rather than ethical

responsibility. The main point of my argument is to readjust this statement by Wills

to say that Muldoon's poetry shies from an essentialist politics of resistance in

favour of a critical dis-position and that this is an _ethical_ responsibility. Wills notes

that Muldoon does not seek to bring the issue of redress to imaginative resolution in

the manner Heaney suggests in his essays. Wills reads Muldoon against Heaney as

though Heaney is a master of balance which in The Redress of Poetry (1995),

Heaney, in the manner of Robert Frost, hopes to be.[7] However, this ignores the

disturbing dis-positions in Heaney's poetry which were discussed at length in the

first chapter. In spite of her misreading of Heaney, Wills argues persuasively that

Muldoon's poetry is a poetry of disturbance, of lack of fit and a poetry whose

elements are somehow awry. Wills's conclusion regarding the reading of Muldoon

is poignant:

> Muldoon's poetry poses redress as a problem – it registers the need to balance ...
> but worries whether this is possible. In other words it is not that the poems achieve

balance (with its connotations of equilibrium and even stillness), but that they keep struggling with the problem.[8]

A series of questions this chapter will ask in relation to Muldoon's poetry are as follows: How do Muldoon's poems refuse containment by transgressing territorial and ideological boundaries? How 'anti-prescriptive' is the poetry and what implications does this have on the representation of 'Irish' identity within the poetry? These questions will provide a framework for discussion of Muldoon's poems 'Meeting the British' (1987), 'The Boundary Commission' (1980), 'Identities' (1973) and 'The Mixed Marriage' (1977). These poems have been chosen as prime examples of Muldoon's poetic concern with territorial and ideological borderlines between identities, and it is necessary to acknowledge that they have been chosen strategically so as to constitute a less 'whimsical' reading of Muldoon and so as to politicize his role as 'the shy trickster' poet.[9] The chapter will explore these poems alongside post-colonial theorization by Homi Bhabha of frontier spaces and hybridity. Discussion will find points of comparison between Muldoon's use of play and indeterminacy, and the anti-essentialist aspects of some post-colonial debate that looks to a fluid dis-position rather than attempting to establish a fixed position. At the same time, the chapter acknowledges that the strategy of 'dis-position' is still a position of sorts and questions the strength of Muldoon's tendency to have it both ways.

This will involve comparing the mule-ish effects of the poetry, (the mule being a cross breed conjured as the title for one of Muldoon's collections), with post-colonial theorization of the hybrid. It is tempting to follow the path of Muldoon's main critics, Tim Kendall and Clair Wills, to argue that a Muldoonian mule-ishness

can be understood in terms of sterility. The mule, as a genetic cross-breed from the coupling of the female horse and male donkey, can be seen as consigned to barrenness by the conflicting pull of its pedigrees which can be read as an extended parable for life in the hybrid state of Northern Ireland.[10] According to both Kendall and Wills, Muldoon's poetry is often in two places at once or one place twice, and they view this doubleness as a symptom of the divided culture, territory and consciousness of Ulster.[11] This is an important reading that acknowledges the schizophrenic culture into which Muldoon was born. Nevertheless, hybridity and dividedness, doubleness and splitting need to be discussed in more detail in relation to post-colonial theorization in order to ask what are the ethics of Muldoon's mule-ish poems.

The chapter ignores Muldoon's suggestion that theorists 'get over themselves' and utilize theoretical debate as it outlines discussion of anti-foundational thought in relation to a post-colonial politics of identity formation.[12] The argument makes connections between the theorists outlined, and statements made by Muldoon in his lectures and interviews. The following sections explore the poetry in relation to former discussion of the post-colonial, the transgression of boundaries, hybridity, the representation of identity and Muldoon's statements regarding the nature of his poetry. The implications of this comparison are discussed in the concluding section which argues firstly, that Muldoon's poetry is more prescriptive than he claims and secondly, that his prescriptive strategies of the anti-prescriptive have a lot in common with the 'strategic essentialism' of post-colonial theories undertaken in different ways by Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Of course, such a connection

sticks out its neck as it pulls against the poet's wish to evade theory. At the same

time, it is useful to acknowledge just how far Muldoon's attempt to evade theoretical

essentialism and containment is also taken on by post-colonial projects as they

explore issues of border transgression. In what follows, post-colonial theorization of

borderlines and hybridity will be introduced alongside discussion of the border

crossings in Muldoon's poems.

Gravity and Levity

In an interview with Clair Wills (1986) Muldoon has commented: 'That's what the

process of writing is about. It's about opening himself, or herself, to the floodgates,

what it's about is discovering the extent of limits, the confinement, the controlling of

readings, of possible readings'.[13] Muldoon's terms are conspicuously

psychoanalytic as, in the vein of Kristeva who will be discussed in the next chapter,

he imagines 'opening himself, or herself, to the floodgates' in an exploration of

liminality. In two places at once, in one place twice or eroding the line in between

different ways of being and understanding, Muldoon opens himself to alterity or 'the

other'. Muldoon's comment notices the merging ('opening the floodgates') and

splitting ('recognizing the limits') that is part of the process or writing and

identification yet his comments provide no point of resolution between the two.

The paradox here is that Muldoon takes up a certain mastery as he advocates 'the

controlling of readings'. On the one hand, Muldoon speaks of opening oneself to the

floodgates, but on the other, he also hopes to discover 'the extent of limits'. As he

notes in his Bateson lecture (1998):

> Now you may detect a certain discord or discrepancy in that position, or positions, I'm espousing here. On the one hand I'm arguing for the supremacy of 'unknowing', for the Keatsian model of poet as conduit, channel, the 'belly' from which a poem is ventriloquised, the 'chameleon poet', the poet whose imagination, he wrote, 'it has no self – it is everything and nothing'. On the other I'm arguing for the almost total 'knowing' of Robert Frost, a 'knowing' which I've been at pains to substantiate. The point to which I've been getting round is that it's the poet's job to take into account, as best he or she is able, all possible readings of the poem.[14]

On the one hand, Muldoon leans towards a Keatsian 'negative capability', 'when

man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable

reaching after fact and reason', whereby a distrust of authenticity becomes an artistic

and political responsibility that is critical and sceptical. On the other hand, he draws

on the 'knowing' of Robert Frost in his reading of 'The Silken Tent'.[15] Here,

Muldoon answers Heaney's example of Frost that is mentioned in his Oxford lecture

'Above the Brim' which was left out of the Redress of Poetry (1995), and in which

Heaney describes Frost's ability as a tightrope walker to tread a line, perhaps a

'conduit' or 'channel', a middle space between 'buoyancy' and 'gravity'. According

to Heaney, Frost writes 'above the brim', not as an escapologist who flies in the face

of reason but as a poet who thinks at the limit in an attempt to inhabit a 'refreshing

plane', recognizing the extent of limits rather than moving to any utopian beyond.[16]

Muldoon's dis-position between Keats and Frost is torn on the one hand, between a

romantic and imaginative flight into uncertainty and doubt, and on the other, a

knowing awareness of the limits of transcendence. That is, between Heaney's

Hercules and Antaeus; transcendence and gravity.

Attempting to extend the limits of thinking and writing, to avoid confinement in the name of disjunction, Muldoon's favoured place is a dis-position; a case of being in '[t]wo places at once was it, or one place twice?', or maybe three or four more. This dis-positioning provides a sharp break from the way in which Muldoon perceives Heaney's earlier work. In an interview with Kevin Barry (1987), when Muldoon was asked whether the Irish situation provides a limiting position of fixed political allegiance, Muldoon answered:

> There's no tribe in Ireland for which I would feel comfortable as a spokesman. I wonder who would, who does, who is? I think Seamus Heaney flirted – I think "flirted" is the word – with the idea of it for a while ... But I don't think even Seamus flirts with it now. From what I can work out of his recent poems, I think Seamus is now much more interested in the idea of the free agent ...[17]

This statement is important for two reasons: first, Muldoon draws up a distinction between Heaney's early work and his later poems which I have identified in the first chapter as those poems from Station Island (1984) onwards; second, the distinction relies on a division Muldoon implicitly draws up between the crude nationalist who flirts with the idea of speaking for the tribe and the post-nationalist who hopes to be a 'free agent' or uncontainable within a delimited sectarian space. Interestingly, Muldoon's view of Heaney sees him not entirely abandoning the nationalist need for 'free space' yet he seeks freedom not through expressing an attachment to Irish territory but through the need to 'discover the extent of limits' in the hope of thereby becoming a more 'free agent' who deterritorializes or becomes less grounded. Muldoon simplifies Heaney in his 'January Journal' of 1992 which was recomposed in The Prince of the Quotidian (1994): "the great physician of the earth/ is waxing metaphysical, has taken to 'walking on air';/ as Goethe termed it, Surf and Turf".[18]

As was discussed in the first chapter, Heaney's recent poetry comes closer to

Muldoon's dis-position between the pull of gravity and transcendence. This chapter

will take discussion of flight in Heaney further by alluding to the tensions within

Muldoon between gravity and flight, the sensible and nonsensical, and the grave and

the hilarious. This exploration of Muldoon's double-coding will involve

acknowledging that in order to take flight one needs a certain relation to gravity, and

in order to express levity one must know what it is to be grave.

Thinking Otherwise

Muldoon's dis-positions move into a less limited space that at first seems evocative

of Richard Kearney's description of the fifth province. Kearney looks to a middle

space of mediation or 'mide' that would exist between identities; that is a fifth

province which he defines in Post-nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy

(1997) in terms of Tara:

> Although Tara was the political centre of Ireland, this fifth province acted as a
> second centre, which if non-political, was just as important, acting as a necessary
> balance. The present, unhappy state of our country would seem to indicate a need
> for this second centre of gravity ... This province, this place, this centre, is not a
> political or geographical position, it is more like a disposition ... This place, I
> submit , is not a fixed point or centralized power ... The answer to the old proverb -
> 'where is the middle of the world' - remains as true as ever: 'here and elsewhere'.
> We are speaking not of a power of political possession but a power of mind. The
> fifth province can be imagined and reimagined; but it cannot be occupied. In the
> fifth province it is always a question of thinking otherwise.[19]

Here Celtic society is viewed as centrifugal or tending to flee from a centre. In this

way, Kearney views it as postmodern in its 'organization' and as an ungrounded

post-nationalist home: 'a "bottomless centre" bespoken to a more global

circumference'. The fifth province is a 'second centre of gravity' and a neutral ground. Kearney's notion of 'thinking otherwise' connects with a post-colonial insistence that cultural and political identities are constructed through a process of alterity. Such a dis-position links local identity with cosmopolitan identity; identity is seen as a process and in terms of the migrant. Forsaking the traditional post-colonial nationalist agenda of reclaiming one's homeland, in favour of the unheimlich, and the importance of being elsewhere, this provides new conceptual and perpetual spaces, with the effect of 'thinking otherwise' or in terms of 'the other'.

The problem with Kearney's notion of Mide is that he imagines the middle ground as being a balanced point of resolution, as the best of both worlds and the best route beyond the British-Irish conflict in the North of Ireland. In this way, Mide becomes a utopian space where all is healed, the place where fractured identities can come together; the fifth province is conceived in terms of a spiritual and intellectual ideal that provides some impetus for political change. Kearney understands Mide not only as an imaginative realm but also in terms of a material politics of cultural pluralism and mediation which, in the evolving framework of a post-nationalist Europe of Regions, may lead to the affirmation and acceptance of differences.[20] This stance abandons a strictly nationalist project in favour of the European Union, cultural negotiation, multi-culturalism and pluralism. Kearney argues in philosophical terms for a compromise: a situation where there is acceptance of 'the other' or love of alterity which refuses to subordinate identity to sameness, yet does not allow for separatism in the form of sectarianism. In this way, Kearney uses the

model of an ethical relationship between self and 'other' to constitute a politics that envisages the favourite ideals of conflict analysis: multiculturalism, tolerance and balance. Kearney's debate hopes to establish a more ethical point of balance or common ground between the demands of different communities by taking away the ground that identifies a certain community with particular ideas about territorial and institutional rights, and positioning it within a 'neutral' space where the individual must engage with 'the other' on a basis of multicultural tolerance and negotiation, rather than sectarianism and an assertion of institutional rights that impinge on the 'other'.

However, in response to the cases posed for multicultural balancing acts and confronting the inscription of alterity within the self, Homi Bhabha questions whether the encounter with alterity entails that the persisting split of the subject is the condition of freedom?[21] If so, he asks, how do we specify the persisting split of the historical conditions or 'splitting' in political situations of 'unfreedom' - in colonial and postcolonial margins? Models of 'splitting' identities and retaining difference between identities seems hardly helpful when considered in relation to a sectarian context of racial apartheid. Kearney's multicultural model of Mide is thrown back into schizophrenia by Bhabha's recognition of unbalanced historical conditions of 'splitting'. The argument of this chapter will be that as Muldoon's poems explore 'in-betweeness' and the desire to get to a balanced point of mediation, the poetry struggles with and denies such a resolution.

Muldoon's anti-prescriptive dis-position is comparable with work by the post-colonial theorist, Iain Chambers, who argues that '[i]dentities are located across the

hyphen, the transition, the bridge, the passage between, rather than firmly located in any one culture, place or position'.[22] Chambers imagines that identities are located at a third position, bridge or translation between cultures since every inscription of identity is always in relation to an-other. Therefore, identification is split from the start since one names oneself always in terms of one's relation to another. Thus, Chambers argues for an awareness of the alterity by which identities are constituted rather than imagining that identities can exist or come into being untouched by others. According to these terms: my identity does not exist in singular self-containment since it relates to and defines itself in terms of others; there are many of me, many 'me s' evolving and so my identity is unfixed and constantly in process. This understanding of identity will inform readings of Muldoon's poems.

In addition, Chambers reads the anxious neurosis of the West as the fear of transition or slipping across the border and becoming the object: an 'I' finding itself under the judgement of other eyes.[23] Comparably, in Franz Fanon's analysis, the colonizer (or Self) who cannot relate to the native (or 'other') sets up an oppositional relationship. Fanon describes this neurosis of the West in <u>Black Skin White Masks</u> (1986): 'He who is reluctant to recognize me opposes me'.[24] The colonizer is defined in positive terms while the native is defined in negative terms, and Fanon argues that this leads to a refusal to allow for there to be any common ground or bridge between Self and 'other'. Hence, reciprocity between identities becomes dependent upon this transition, the third position, the hyphen or the bridge that translates identity in an act of negotiation. This translation need not be essentialist or rely on essence, but can be a partial representation and it compares with the space

of Mide as a passage between identities. The encounter with another need not

necessarily be imperialist. According to post-colonial criticism, imperialism is

dependent upon refusing a third position in favour of self-containment and racial

apartheid. According to post-colonial terms and the issues raised by Kearney's

brush with conflict analysis, to disallow the possibility of a third position, a hyphen

or fifth province of mediation between identities results in a cultural deadlock

between identities or agents. The post-colonial illustrates how self-containment and

individuality are a fallacy since no pure and singular identity is possible and it views

identity as transformative whereby binaries are blurred. This has the effect of

deconstructing totalizing forms of identity such as those relied upon by imperialism

and nationalism, suggesting, as has Homi Bhabha, that identity is hybrid. Bhabha's

theorization of hybridity provides a useful way into Muldoon's poems.

In his essay 'The postmodern and the post-colonial' (1994), Bhabha explores the

politics of identity in an attempt to 'rename the postmodern from the position of the

post-colonial'.[25] Bhabha's theories move from vacuously celebrating the

astonishing pluralism of human cultures as he pays attention to the inequalities of

cultural representation and the 'uneven forces of cultural representation involved in

the contest for political and social authority' (p.171). Bhabha insists that

> ... power be thought in the hybridity of race and sexuality; the nation must be
> conceived liminally as the dynastic-in-the-democratic, race-difference, doubling and
> splitting of class-consciousness: it is through these iterative interrogations and
> historical initiations that the cultural location of modernity shifts to the post-colonial
> site. (p.251)

Bhabha's discussion of the dislocation of identity enters the terrain of international

relations theory which negotiates between 'forces of cultural representation', fission

and unity. This chapter argues that the hybrid spaces of Muldoon's poems juggle

with different 'forces of cultural representation' rather than achieving a balancing

act.

In his essay 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern

nation' (1994), Bhabha attacks the imagined community of the nation:

> The problematic boundaries of modernity are enacted in these ambivalent
> temporalities of the nation-space. The language of culture and community is poised
> on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past.
> Historians transfixed on the event and origins of the nation never ask, and political
> theorists possessed of the 'modern' totalities of the nation – 'homogeneity, literacy
> and anonymity are the key traits' – never pose, the essential question of the nation
> as a temporal process. (p.142).

Bhabha remembers 'feminist and postcolonial temporalities' that force us to rethink

essentialist versions of history that provide narratives of the nation at the cost of

'forgetting' the 'minority discourses that speak betwixt and between times and

places' (p.157). The following debate argues that like Bhabha's theories, Muldoon's

poems do not turn 'Territory into Tradition' or the 'People into One' (p.149).

Hence, while any influence on Muldoon by Bhabha is unlikely, he implicitly shares

the politics of Bhabha's theorization and in this way, his 'anti-foundational' stance is

more foundational than Muldoon acknowledges. My readings of the poems will

argue that there is a strength in doubleness, in having it both ways, and the linguistic

playfulness of the anti-foundational is in turn a prescription.

Bhabha erases the politics of a straightforward binary opposition between terms in

favour of a non-binary oppositional relation that recalls Rodolphe Gasché's notion

of the 'non-dialectical middle'. In The Tain of the Mirror (1986), Gasché explains

that

> ... a non-dialectical middle [is], a structure of jointed predication, which cannot itself be comprehended by the predicates it distributes ... Not that this ability ... shows any lack of power; rather this inability is constitutive of the very possibility of the logic of identity.[26]

Here, Gasché alludes to the difficulties with comprehending the dis-position of the non-dialectical middle which cannot be understood in terms of the extremes or opposites between which it resides. As Aristotle notes in his explanation of 'The relation between the mean and its extremes': 'The extremes are opposites to the middle as well as to one another, and the middle is opposed to the extremes'.[27] With reference to the poems, what follows will argue that theorization of the non-dialectical middle can be used in our understanding of Muldoon's anti-foundational stance, as he refuses to opt for any authentic and singular notion of national identity or politics.

As Bhabha argues: 'The contingent and the liminal become the time and the spaces for the historical representation of the subjects of cultural difference in a postcolonial criticism' (p.179). Bhabha imagines a liminal space of intervention and looks to translation between identities, thinking in terms of a cultural space 'outside' that places the articulation of identities in a positive rather than a binary relation to one another. This relates back to Kearney's discussion of Mide, the fifth province or middle space where differences are not denied but are held together in a space of mediation. The middle or mediating ground can be imagined as a positive space of solidarity yet difference, a place of continual negotiation as in a coalition politics.

However, if as Aristotle concludes, if 'moral virtue is a mean' how do we attain the mean? The 'non-dialectical middle' is read by Bhabha in terms of Jacques Derrida, the 'supplementary', the 'non-sentence' and the psychoanalytic 'aporia'.

This is a problematic way to view the middle passage between identities because it designates the translating position to a realm of muteness, as the beyond of discourse, and a displaced 'in-between' that cannot easily be articulated or located.[28] As Bhabha attempts to 'think through and beyond theory' (p.181), he asks: "Can there be a social subject of the 'non-sentence'?" (p.183). Bhabha admits that 'the notion of a non-teleological and non-dialectical form of closure has often been considered the most problematic issue for the postmodern agent without a cause' (p.186). Bhabha's theorization of a non-dialectical middle will be discussed in relation to the following poems by Muldoon with the effect of exploring how far this 'non-dialectical' middle passage between identities is problematized within the poetry.

'Twice'

A doubling is played out at a poetic level in Muldoon's poem 'Twice' (1994) which provides the epigraph for this chapter and whose protagonist "'would shift the balance' as he stands 'grinning from both ends of the school photograph,/ having jooked behind the three-deep rest of us to meet the Kodak's/ leisurely pan: 'Two places at once, was it, or one place twice?'"[29] As the school boys are photographed by a moving camera, they run from one end of the picture to the other so that they can get into the photograph twice. The speaker, in two places at once or one place twice, shifts the balance by outlining the limits of identity, time and space with a view to a double presence where the subject is not one nor the other but both. In this

way, the picture in the poem deconstructs the relationship between representation and the real, since any easy understanding of the mimetic function of the camera is undermined as the picture does not reliably reproduce the real or represent the present. The boy challenges mimetic forms of art appealing to a different conception of space and time, whereby he is in two places and two times at once. The poem enacts a doubling or a non-binary, non-dialectical middle from which the chameleon poet questioning identity grins. Here, identity is seen as a joke or something that we perform or enact. The boy running from one end of the picture to the other discovers his identities in the photograph only after he has performed his trick. The poem becomes evocative of play in the sense of a joke and theatrical improvisation; there are no sure models for the representation of identity and identity is presented in terms of a comic enactment as in a theatre where the rules can be bent and there is no script. In the poem 'pure presence' becomes 'pure difference'.[30] So there is no true presence represented in the poem only a conflict of forces which could not be that of a simple origin or identity.[31] As he runs, the boy provides a useful metaphor for understanding the splitting and doubling involved in the constitution and performance of identities, which has been noticed by Bhabha and which will be problematized in relation to Muldoon's other poems.

In the next section Muldoon's poems 'The Boundary Commission', 'Meeting the British', 'The Mixed Marriage' and 'Identities' will be discussed in terms of Bhabha's theorization of hybrid dis-positions outlined here. The section argues that Muldoon, like the aforementioned post-colonial theorists, represents identity in terms of deconstructing totalizing forms of identity, presenting the transformative

nature of identity and a plural inheritance. In interview with John Haffenden (1981)

Muldoon argues:

> One of the ways in which we are most ourselves is that we imagine ourselves to be
> going somewhere else. It's important to most societies to have the notion of
> something out there to which we belong, that our home is somewhere else ... there's
> another dimension, something around us and beyond us, which is our inheritance.[32]

Muldoon 'thinks otherwise' to an 'elsewhere' that is unheimlich yet heimlich or 'our

inheritance'. This comment does not completely do away with or escape from the

concepts of identity or community in the way characterized by postmodern

dissolution of identity; rather, it looks to the alterity that renders 'our home'

'somewhere else' and the ability to not always occupy the same space; to not always

be contained within a known place or by a position of knowing. As with Bhabha's

theorization, the effect of this is that as he undermines delimited notions of identity,

Muldoon's poetry does not entirely do away with identity; instead, his poetry takes a

critical stance or dis-position with regard to identity formation and interrogates the

differential location/s of culture.

In relation to this deterritorializing move on the part of Muldoon as he describes

always being elsewhere and beyond 'our inheritance', it is worth remembering the

mixed heritage and evolutionary aspects of cultures and races. To explain this at a

crude level, prehistorically, Ireland was inhabited by mesolithic settlers and neolithic

farmers. The neolithic settlers originated from the Middle East. They sailed in

coracles to Ireland from Spain, Portugal and Brittany. The existence of artwork in

Ireland similar to that in Brittany and the Iberian peninsula supports the observation

that these people in Ireland belonged to a group of sea-borne immigrants.[33]

Considering the subsequent history of Viking invasion and British colonialism it

seems strange that anyone may call himself a true Irishman except in retaliation

against British imperialism. As for those calling themselves Englishmen this means

denying an entire 'English' history of invasion and infiltration by Romans, Jutes,

Angles, Saxons and French as well as a colonial history where so-called Englishmen

have become intertwined with Indian, Chinese and African identities to name but a

few. This seems an obvious point yet observation that there is no single origin on

which to base a specific identity is constantly forgotten when national identities are

theorized.

However, this is not overlooked by Muldoon's poem 'Promises, Promises' from

Why Brownlee Left (1980) which tells of a colonial who returns to Raleigh's

Roanoke colony to find that the old colonials had

> ... altogether disappeared,
> Only to glimpse us here and there
> As the fair strand in her braid,
> The blue in an Indian girl's dead eye.[34]

Like Bhabha's post-colonial theorization, Muldoon's poem notices how identities

become hybrid, migrant, constantly in flux and enroute, never fixed and stationary,

always ready to be changed and in danger of extinction. Muldoon's poem 'Meeting

the British' can be read with regard to the splitting and doubling involved in the

colonial encounter described in 'Promises, Promises'.

Liminality and Hybridity

'Meeting the British' is the title poem of Muldoon's 1987 collection and it confronts

the problems implicit in an encounter between different identities. The poem

narrates about a meeting between native Americans and the British, and what

happens to identity in this encounter is intricate:

> We met the British in the dead of winter.
> The sky was lavender
>
> and the snow lavender-blue.
> I could hear, far below,
>
> the sound of two streams coming together
> (both were frozen over)[35]

The poem begins with a winter landscape and the image of 'two streams coming

together'. But the encounter is imagined as a moment of breaking ice between two

different cultures; the image of the frozen stream between the natives and the British

indicates that there are barriers between the races from the start. This meeting

illustrates differences in cultural tastes in terms of smell: 'Neither General Jeffrey

Amherst// nor Colonel Henry Bouquet/ could stomach our willow-tobacco', while

the lavender scent coming from the colonel's handkerchief is equally strange to the

natives' noses.

Although associated with what is natural to the place, the scent is artificial and

used to cover the smell of disease or the 'smallpox' that the British give to the

natives. The encounter is one of disease: as soon as the British come into contact

with the natives they suffer from ill health. Alfred W. Crosby in Ecological

Imperialism (1986) has drawn attention to how the way in which Europeans

displaced and replaced natives was often more a matter of biology than of military

conquest.[36] In this way, imperialism operates as much by the transportation of

germs, bugs and seeds, as it does by epistemological and military violence.

Comparably, in 'Meeting the British' we are presented with a meeting where

imperialists abuse the natives' trust and their health. In return for their hospitality, the colonists give the natives 'six fishhooks// and two blankets embroidered with smallpox'. This is the extent of the generosity of the so-called civilizing mission. The colonials are shown to be corrupt, rotten with disease and the historical story of the encounter is that the blankets were deliberately infected with small pox before being handed over as 'gifts' in an act of genocide. In the poem boundaries between bodies are transgressed by the disease, but the infection is not a two way process since the natives are initially untainted or uncorrupted. The poem is hardly a fine example of mediation or 'balance' between cultures.

However, the poem is not this simple. First, it is difficult to locate the voice of the poetic speaker. The poem begins with the word 'We', suggesting that the speaker is one of the natives smoking willow-tobacco. Yet s/he may be a mediator between the two since s/he calls out in French. The French are traditionally enemies of the English and so an Indian speaking French would be seen as a collaborator or double enemy. Her/his use of French is 'no less strange' than the estranged encounter. The French words like the British are alien to the speaker, and there is a sense of the speaker encountering alterity and being assimilated by it in her/his use of a foreign tongue: '*C'est la lavande,/ une fleur mauve comme le ciel*'. The introduction of the French creates confusion and interplay between British, French and native identities, which oscillate between one another suggesting along with metaphors of disease that cultural identities, languages and bodies are not self-contained but interactive.

Moreover, the form of the poem is built with two line stanzas that are divided yet run into one another with the use of enjambment. Even words such as

'handkerchief' split and merge into the following stanza. The form enacts the theme

of the poem where identity and language itself is conveyed as a process of perpetual

splitting and merging. In 'Meeting the British', identities are held in binary

opposition to one another yet there are hints of infiltration between bodily, linguistic

and ideological frontiers. However, this transgression of bodily boundaries is

presented in the negative terms of a disease which infiltrates and corrupts. In this

poem, an encounter with 'the other' is presented as being exploitative and damaging.

As Tim Kendall notices, Muldoon has remained aware of parallels between the

respective fates of the Irish and native Americans while acknowledging that many

Irish became settlers in America, taking over native American territories which is

acknowledged to a certain extent in Muldoon's 'The More a Man Has the More a

Man Wants' from Quoof (1983) when he narrates of a 'Sioux busily tracing the

family tree/ of an Ulsterman who had some hand/ in the massacre at Wounded

Knee'.[37] Muldoon notices that there are differences as well as similarities between

the two colonies:

> It would be naïve of me to say that there's no parallel. There is a sense in which the
> Irish culture was ... not exactly decimated, but certainly, the history of England and
> Ireland has not been a happy one. Now I don't think I'd want to go to the extent, of
> course, where one would say that this was absolute genocide – as one might say of
> what happened in North America.[38]

A colonial history of boundaries is also presented in Muldoon's poem 'The

Boundary Commission' from Why Brownlee Left (1980). Guinn Batten notices that

one cannot talk of "borders" without evoking the political, historical and psychic

trauma of the Boundary Commission's 1920s partition of Ireland into two states.[39]

Ireland's colonial history is one of dispossession and Ireland is a society where

possessive and definitive religious, territorial and racial frontiers have been drawn-up. 'The Boundary Commission' presents an uncertain space 'across Golightly's lane':

> *You remember that village where the border ran*
> *Down the middle of the street,*
> *With the butcher and baker in different states?*
> Today he remarked how a shower of rain
>
> Had stopped so cleanly across Golightly's lane
> It might have been a wall of glass
> That had toppled over. He stood there, for ages,
> To wonder which side, if any, he should be on.[40]

In this poem boundaries are both created and undermined.

First, there is a division between the perspective of the poetic speaker and the perspective of the male figure whose speech is reported at the beginning of the poem. The use of two perspectives, one in each stanza, has the effect of introducing the issues of representation and interpretation being subjective and visual. The stanzas are separated or interrupted in a way that complements the image of rain stopping suddenly at one point. Yet the punctuation is continuous with enjambement between the two stanzas which has the formal effect of blurring the boundary between the stanzas and undermines the visual image of the clean cut 'shower of rain'. The opening question of '[y]ou remember', appeals to the other figure to respond and the perspectives of each of the figures joins; so there is no clear division between the vision of the male figure and the poetic voyeur; it is as if they see and 'wonder' the same thing.

Second, there is a division between natural and unnatural boundaries or the 'shower of rain' and the 'wall of glass'. The comparison of the rain and glass

merges visually. How then do we perceive the differences between rain and glass? The sheet of glass is evocative of a mirror and within the poem there is a mirroring effect where things become the opposite of what they are expected to be. The rain stopping 'cleanly across Golightly's lane' seems a freak of nature or unnatural. While the 'wall of glass' or the Partition between the North and South of Ireland is artificial, political and ideological, yet within the everyday context of a border village, where 'the butcher and baker' are 'in different states', this is normalized. With the use of two perspectives, and the elision of the image of the rain and wall of glass, the differences between perception and representation are thrown into question which is comparable with the preoccupation with perception of the Partition that was found in discussion in the last chapter of Tom Paulin's 'Line on the Grass'.[41]

However, the borderline in 'Line on the Grass' is represented as a landscape or no man's land that is identified within the poem, whereas in Muldoon's poem the frontier disappears. For example, at what point does the rain stop? One is either in the rain or not, so where is the middle point that is neither in the rain nor out of the rain? In Muldoon's poem, it is as if the middle point disappears when put under any pressure. This can be related to the law of the excluded middle or the question of how to find the mean, as outlined in Aristotle.[42] Muldoon both highlights a medium point and magics it away. Hence, in the poem frontiers do not hold because perception of them is uncertain, so the boundary 'might have been a wall of glass/ that had toppled over' because it is fragile and easily smashed. Distinctions are not easily made and the male figure wonders 'which side, if any, he should be on'. This

suggests that the figure is on 'no side', while the words 'if any' hint that he may not intend to join either. The poem leaves the figure in a 'dis-position' which is difficult to locate.

In relation to this, Timothy Kearney remarks that Northern poetry turns on the individual endeavouring to find a community in the force-field of intractable tensions: "In other words, the crisis issues not only the question 'to which community can I best belong?' but also the more searching question '[c]an I belong to any community at all?'"[43] Kearney argues that such a discrepancy between the individual and her/his community is one we have grown to accept as integral to postmodern literary traditions.[44] Muldoon has already commented that he has no tribe for which he can be spokesperson. This questioning of the relationship between the individual and the community undermines the identity politics of post-colonial nationalism which looks to establishing a secure national ground with which the individual can identify.

'The Boundary Commission' articulates an ambivalence over national space. The boundary line of Partition has been drawn-up, constructing an apartheid between terms. However, this division is also undermined as the figure in 'The Boundary Commission' chooses neither side of the lane and opts for a disappearing middle. It would be assumed though, that the 'different states' of the Republic of Ireland and the North are politically distinguishable from one another since one place is a British colony, the other, a post-colonial republic. However, in Muldoon's poem, these differences are elided into a situation where the speaker stands in the middle 'for ages' wondering at the relative differences between them and refusing to join either.

The speaker could reside in a space comparable with Kearney's notion of Mide, except that Muldoon's middle offers no sense of balance in terms of the resolution that lurks in Kearney's theorization with his hope for 'the affirmation and acceptance of difference'.[45] As the poem tries to imagine the figure to be in-between the dry and wet sides of the road; he is literally at the point where 'a shower of rain// Had stopped' or where the 'wall of glass' has 'toppled'. He is ungrounded or residing in 'the middle of the street' or a no man's land, a mean that is difficult to find and a non-dialectical middle that is not spoken. This problematic notion of Mide or the middle serves to deconstruct the frontiers between extremes and to hold them together in tension.

The idea of a middle ground can be developed further with consideration of the name of 'Golightly's Lane' in which the man stands. The name 'go lightly' evokes the image of treading on egg shells. The initial Boundary Commission was supposed to be temporary and remains a testimony to the lack of resolution by politicians who go-lightly around the issue. In addition, the name Golightly links with the name of the protagonist Gallogly, the IRA man, from 'The More a Man Has The More a Man Wants', who is 'otherwise known as Golightly'.[46] The name, Gallogly, is the Irish version of the word 'gallowglass' or 'gallóglach', for mercenary soldier.[47] The galloglachs were Scottish mercenary soldiers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who were driven out of Scotland by the English. In 'The More a Man Has The More a Man Wants', 'Golightly' is 'otherwise known as Ingoldsby,/ otherwise known as English' and he is associated with the legend of a Kentish man, the fighting knight Sir Ingoldsby Bray, in love with Lady Alice. This

story is told by Richard Barham (1788-1845) in his comic verse narratives about supernatural themes in The Ingoldsby Legends (1840-7). Linking the names Gallogly and Golightly, Muldoon collapses the distinctions between two irreconcilables: the IRA man on the run and the English 'Gall'. So the name of 'Golightly's Lane' is poignant since due to Muldoon's use elsewhere of assonance and poetic pun, he collapses distinctions between 'sides' or frontiers, or between the names of native and foreign; Golightly is associated with the English, Irish and Scottish. Clair Wills has drawn attention to the polysemous use of words in Muldoon's poetry and argued that this is a postmodern characteristic of linguistic interchange that erodes differences between meanings in a moment of exchange.[48] What is important here, is how Muldoon's polysemous use of words throughout his poetry also demonstrates the hybrid aspects of language and identity. Residing around a 'non-dialectic middle' that is difficult to find results in a critical dis-positioning between extremes that holds irreconcilables together in their difference.

At the edge, boundary or limit, the speaker in the poem both signifies and collapses distinctions between the two sides. He is dis-located at a borderline and he is unable to judge which side to join. The man in 'The Boundary Commission' expresses no fixed allegiances but an open-mindedness that wonders which side, if any, he should be on. Located at the limit, the man holds onto his identity which is not subsumed within any totalitarian unity and his dis-position provides a passage between identities whereby the authenticity of either side is questioned. However, another way of reading this situation would be to say that the man on the border has no identity, he remains self-contained or untouched and in his refusal to engage with

either side, he avoids encountering alterity in an act of extreme individualism that provides no opportunity for action or change. Hence, interpretation of the poem divides into two readings that sees the speaker on the one hand, providing a passage between identities and on the other, creating a cleavage between identities. In this way, Muldoon's poem gives us another two new sides to be between. Can this cleavage between Self and 'other', or between two different sides be viewed as enabling, disabling or both, and for whom? The only 'answer' offered to this question in 'The Boundary Commission' is that, unlike Muldoon's characterization of Heaney's early collections, the speaker has allegiances to neither side. This lack of resolution is the only way to understand Muldoon's conception of identity and representation. There is a tension in the poem between encountering alterity, touching or being touched and changed by it, and facing 'otherness' but refusing to engage with it. The poem asks how far the wall of glass holds between identities and although the speaker is a middle man, the poem provides no spirit levelled sense of balance. Rather, the poem articulates a rupture while holding opposites together.

Unlike 'The Boundary Commission', Muldoon's poem 'Identities' represents identities in a process of continual altering and interaction. His poem can be read in terms of hybridity, self-containment, community and individualism, which are four contradictory issues that problematize postmodern, post-colonial and post-nationalist readings of identity, and refuse to be resolved. For example, in 'Identities' from New Weather (1973), the speaker recounts an encounter:

> When I reached the sea
> I fell in with another who had just come
> From the interior. Her family
> Had figured in a past regime

But her father was now imprisoned.

She had travelled, only by night,
Escaping just as her own warrant
Arrived and stealing the police boat,
As far as this determined coast.

As it happened, we were staying at the same
Hotel, pink and goodish for the tourist
Quarter. She came that evening to my room
Asking me to go to the capital,
Offering me wristwatch and wallet,
To search out an old friend who would steal
Papers for herself and me. Then to be married,
We could leave from that very harbour.

I have been wandering since, back up the streams
That had once flowed simply one into the other,
One taking the other's name.[49]

The opening image of the sea introduces associations with fluidity, journeying, the groundless and notions of liquidity where elements cannot be separated but run into one another. A merging and dissolution of boundaries is conveyed particularly in the last lines of the poem as the use of assonance enables the words in the line to audibly run into one another in a way that is different from the two streams in 'Meeting the British' which merge only with great difficulty since they are frozen over.

The poem is composed of words which convey movement such as: 'reached', 'fell', 'come', 'travelled', 'escaping', 'arrived', 'came', 'go', 'search,' 'leave' and 'wandering' which contrast with the static speaker from 'The Boundary Commission'. This diction has the effect of communicating their diasporic journeying from one stage to another: all is flux, nothing is stationary. The speaker in the poem 'fell in with another' who comes from the 'interior', heartland or centre and journies out to the periphery or the edge of 'this determined coast'. The couple

in the poem could be regarded as migrant, ungrounded or <u>unheimlich</u>. Just as they

challenge the limits of the law, they also cross the 'determined' limits of the land,

from 'interior' to 'coast'. Paradoxically, the two are most at home as

deterritorializing nomads travelling on the periphery of coast and seascape.

'The other' in the poem is female and she asks the speaker to marry her in order to

assume another name or identity, so it is likely that the poetic speaker would be

male. In stanza one, we learn how 'her father', male identity or the Name of the

Father 'was now imprisoned'. Identity becomes politicized in the poem as the

woman is herself being chased by the authorities so that she must seek political

asylum with new '[p]apers for herself and me'. Yet identity is conveyed less in

terms of papers and more in terms of territory as each travels at the edge of it or as

far as the sea. As one stream takes on the name of the other, the woman exchanges

her 'wristwatch and wallet' for his name. In order to be married they must leave the

coast and go back to the metropolitan centre or 'capital'. In this way, identity is

assimilated or subordinated into sameness in a moment of capitalist exchange.

Naming is associated with the capital whereas migrancy and losing the past is

associated with lack of identity, the periphery and the sea. The sexual encounter

would also be a process of giving which is associated with the material exchange of

the wallet and wristwatch, and the capital or even capitalism of the 'tourist/ Quarter'

of the 'pink' '[h]otel room'. In its presentation of identity, the poem does not

present a sublime encounter with alterity but a human, material and even capitalist

relationship of give and take. This moment of taking may be viewed in terms of

imperialist or chauvinist taking over and naming 'the other'.

Alternatively, the encounter may be viewed as an act of reciprocity between

individuals. Although the couple are separated at the end of the poem, the final

image is sexual and one of intermingling fluids. The speaker wanders along streams

which 'had once flowed simply' into one another: 'One taking the other's name'.

The title of the poem suggests plural identity and hybridity, and this reiterates the

dedication of New Weather to Muldoon's 'mothers' and 'fathers'. The sexual

metaphors of mingling fluids surrounding the couple's relationship suggests that

identity is interactive, unresolved and constantly in process. Moving between the

limits of coast and capital, race and sexuality, Muldoon's poem 'Identities'

undermines notions of identity as centralized and pure, in favour of liminal locations

and hybridity where one takes on another name. In this poem, identity is presented

in the plural as an unbalanced site of struggle which is affected by materialism and

social politics, where the capital and the liminal periphery exist in tension with one

another, and where frontiers are continually crossed.

Using Bhabha's terms from his essay 'DissemiNation', the couple in 'Identities'

can be described as wandering people

> ... who will not be contained within the Heim of the national culture and its
> unisonant discourse, but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that
> alienates the frontiers of the modern nation ... They articulate the death-in-life of
> the idea of the 'imaginary community' of the nation; the worn-out metaphors of the
> resplendent national life now circulate in another narrative of entry – permits and
> passports and work-permits that at once preserve and proliferate, bind and breach
> the human rights of the nation.[50]

In 'Identities' identity is represented in terms not of purity but fusion, and the

relationship is presented as a messy human process of exchange and transgression

rather than as a singular, self-contained encounter. 'Identities' is 'anti-prescriptive'

in as far as it subscribes to the representation of identity in terms of both mingling

and apartness, hybridity and difference. A further point is that 'Identities' never

says exactly where or when the poem is located or of what race are the couple. In

this way, 'Identities' leaves identity indeterminate, somewhere on the periphery, at

the limits of space and time, in a non-specific place and non-specific history. Hence,

there is little sense of a foundational 'national Heim', gravity or fixity within the

poem.

'The Mixed Marriage' from Mules (1977) explores issues of mingling and

apartness, hybridity and difference, from the point of view of a child of mixed

parentage who, as Clair Wills notes, is a mule-ish go-between:[51]

> My father was a servant boy.
> When he left school at eight or nine
> He took up billhook and loy
> To win the ground he would never own.[52]

The mother is a 'school mistress' from the 'world of Castor and Pollux', while it is

likely that the father is a Catholic and Republican since he joins 'The Ribbon boys'.

The marriage is one between opposing identities yet the relationship is sustained as

the couple allow each other to lead their separate lives: one in 'a hole in the hedge',

the other in 'a room in the Latin Quarter'. This metaphor provides yet another

division between the couple in terms of the rural and the urban: the father is

provincial and grounded in the Irish landscape while the mother is educated and

cosmopolitan. Their separation is further enacted in the verse form whereby each

parent resides in a separate stanza. They belong to separate worlds which is evoked

in the reference to 'Gulliver's Travels' where the protagonist journeys between

radically different realms. Yet the opposition between the parents is not seen just in

terms of the anticipated Irish/English, Catholic/Protestant divisions but also in terms

of French, Irish, Eighteenth Century, Classical, peasant and republican identities,

and earth and sky .

The agrarian struggles of the Ribbon men over the land with which the father is

associated is opposed to the heavenly 'world of Castor and Pollux' at which the

mother gazes. The child is a product of parents from different worlds who have

differing perspectives. The child's position between earth and heaven can be

compared with the dual vision of the person in 'Blemish' who looks out of two

different eyes:

> Were it indeed an accident of birth
> That she looks on the gentle earth
> And the seemingly gentle sky
> Through one brown, and one blue eye.[53]

Castor and Pollux reappear in 'Armageddon, Armageddon' (1977) and Clair Wills

notices how they are not only the sign of the zodiac but

> ... also the twins who in Irish legend were born to Queen Macha after her husband
> forced her to race against horses. As Macha died in childbirth she called down a
> curse on Ulster, so that the twins now augur the evil which is now visited on
> Northern Ireland.[54]

This doubleness or dual vision can once more be understood in terms of the Partition

of the North of Ireland; a territory torn in two and occupied by two different races,

cultures, religions or identities.

However, the representation of identity in the poetry is not simply clear cut or

dichotomous since the child, 'flitting' between the parents, also provides a bridge

between them. It seems that the child is the only evidence of mixture in the

marriage. As the poem is narrated from the position of the hybrid, 'The Mixed

Marriage' demonstrates that a middle ground between identities need not be thought in terms of a dehumanized, inarticulable and mute space as suggested by Homi Bhabha. The child speaks of their separate lives yet also of their togetherness within this condition of difference; the hybrid is therefore conceived in terms of a human voice rather than thought of in terms of a mute theoretical space of the non-sentence.

The image of the 'twins' in the mother's class also produces a mirroring effect since 'she could never tell which was which', and this connects back to Castor and Pollux. Although the twins are separate individuals, their identity is similar and there is confusion between them. Hence, identity is once more presented in terms of both difference and sameness; splitting and merging. There is no neat resolution between identities in the poem but a continual process of hybridity and separation so that identity is both constructed and deconstructed. The frontiers of fixed identity both hold and disintegrate. Once more, Muldoon's poem refuses any stable and prescriptive position from which to view identity.

Dis-positions

This presentation of unresolved, ungrounded and hybrid identities supports Muldoon's statement that his poetry is 'anti-prescriptive'. In the poems 'Meeting the British', 'The Boundary Commission', 'Identities' and 'The Mixed Marriage', encounters with alterity are presented in positive, negative and indifferent terms. Muldoon's refusal to provide an easy answer to the national question and his open-ended poetry is evocative of discussion by the post-colonial critic Gayatri Spivak. It

is necessary to acknowledge the national, racial, sexual and theoretical differences between Spivak and Muldoon; yet her notion of a 'practical politics of an open end' that cannot be 'some kind of massive ideological act' bringing 'about a drastic change', maps onto Muldoon's 'strenuous' refusal of poetic closure and points to a dis-position beyond essentialist philosophies. Spivak's notion of 'an everyday maintenance politics', where in individual ways, political essentialism is called to heel in a refusal to be held captive by any over-arching narrative, compares with Muldoon's refusal of the prescriptive.[55] Without eliding the different identities of Muldoon and the theorists mentioned in this chapter, Muldoon's 'anti-prescriptive' stance at the limits of knowing allows him to redefine space and identity in ways which cross the frontiers of understanding in an act of critical vigilance.

For example, one of the most interesting points of Guinn Batten's essay 'The Borderline Disorders of Muldoon's Poetry' (1996), is in a footnote where he recalls Colin Graham's essay in a special issue of the Irish Review entitled "Defining Borders" (1994). In this essay Graham calls on scholars of colonial and post-colonial culture in Ireland to follow the example of India's Subaltern Studies Group by exploring "liminal" or "subaltern" positions of resistance or "ambivalence". Such a move, argues Batten via Graham, shifts the post-colonial theorist from a critical position "tied to a narrative which celebrates" a teleology of revolution that culminates in the formation of a nation-state, and which makes a fantasized national unity "an object of sentimental attachment, cultural pride and community fixity", toward a critique drawn from the "'liminal spaces' of colonial discourse; marginal

areas, where the ultimate opposition of coloniser and colonised breaks down through irony, imitation and subversion".[56]

Here, Graham is allied with Homi Bhabha, as he attempts to think in terms of 'post-modern post-colonialism' which critiques the containment of essentialist and authentic conceptions of national identity in favour of noticing the liminal spaces or passages between identities. A liminal dis-position or in Muldoon's terms, being double or twice, he is neither one nor the other but several. This move away from fixed modes of identity on the part of Muldoon results in poems about identities that resist closure, that refuse to bring about some great ideological act that will change everything but also poems that call to heel political essentialism in an act of critical vigilence.

Such an open-ended struggle or in Spivak's terms, 'everyday maintenance politics', characterizes the balancing acts undertaken by the liminal speakers in the poems by Muldoon discussed in this chapter, making his poetic space more evocative of Bhabha's liminal spaces of struggle than Kearney's middle place of resolution. Muldoon's disruptiveness also characterizes the 'post-modern, post-colonial and post-nationalist' politics of Bhabha. In the conclusion of The Location of Culture (1994), entitled "'Race', time and the revision of modernity", he notices:

> There is no longer an influential separatist emphasis on simply elaborating an anti-imperialist ... tradition 'in itself'. There is an attempt to interrupt ... discourses of modernity through these displacing, interrogative ... narratives and the critical-theoretical perspectives they engender.[57]

It is precisely this refusal to stay rooted in essentialism, that characterizes the poems by Muldoon that have been discussed as they provide the reader with 'displacing' and 'interrogative' 'perspectives'. As Muldoon attempts to avoid the limits of the

prescriptive, he touches on 'post-modern, post-colonial and post-nationalist'

'critical-theoretical perspectives' that are symptomatic of his dis-position as a

contemporary poet from the divided state of Ulster who has emigrated to the United

States. The intention here has not been to simply understand Muldoon's doubling in

terms of postmodern theorization but rather within the post-colonial context of

Ulster; in relation to a colonial inheritance, a divided nation and a schizophrenic

culture. Muldoon's critical dis-positions are a symptom of the divided nature of the

territory and culture from which he originated, yet his poetry seeks to sever his

rootedness and containment, within a particular culture and mode of thinking, in

order to 'think otherwise' and be 'elsewhere'. This is typified by his poem 'Twice'

with which this chapter began, where the schoolboy stands grinning at both ends of

the school photograph. This poem provides a memorable metaphor for the

doubleness and the dis-positions that have been found in the borderline poems

focused on in this chapter, and in the first section as a whole. In order to take this

argument further, the next chapter will consider the 'borderline disorders' of a

selection of Medbh McGuckian's poems in relation to feminist as well as post-

colonial discussion. However, it is first necessary to introduce the second section of

this thesis which will focus on women writing both sides of the border and the

importance of French feminism in relation to readings of Irish women writers.

'Notes to Chapter Three'

[1] Paul Muldoon, 'Twice', The Annals of Chile, (1994), p.12.

[2] Oxford Concise English Dictionary, 9[th] edition, ed., Della Thompson, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.594.

[3] Clair Wills, Reading Paul Muldoon, (Manchester: Bloodaxe, 1998), p.9.

[4] Lynn Keller, 'An Interview with Paul Muldoon', Contemporary Literature, Vol.35, 1994, p.8.

[5] Paul Muldoon, 'Hedgehog', New Weather, (London: Faber, 1973), p.36.

[6] Wills, 'The Politics of Poetic Form', Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry, (Oxford: U.P., 1993), p.16.

[7] Seamus Heaney, The Redress of Poetry, (London: Faber, 1995).

[8] Wills, Reading Paul Muldoon, p.21.

[9] Neil Corcoran, 'The Shy Trickster', Times Literary Supplement, 28 October 1983, p.1180.

[10] Wills, Reading Paul Muldoon, pp.46-47. Tim Kendall, Paul Muldoon, (Bridgend: Seren, 1996), p.49.

[11] At the level of postmodern theorization this can be related to Charles Jencks's notion of 'dual-coding' in The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, (London: Academy, 1977, 1978) , p.6. Jencks argues that postmodern architecture celebrates 'contradictory codes' as 'architects recognize the schizophrenia and code their buildings on two levels', p.130. This results in the creation of an unsettling architecture that works in terms of doubling, irony and ambivalence. This dis-position can be thought in terms of dis-location.

[12] Muldoon, 'F.W. Bateson Memorial Lecture, Getting Round: Notes Towards an Ars Poetica', Oxford, 19 February 1998, Essays in Criticism, Vol.XLVIII, April 1998, No.2, p.120.

[13] 'An Interview with Paul Muldoon', Clair Wills, Nick Jenkins and John Lancaster, Oxford Poetry, 3:1, Winter 1986/7, 14-20.

[14] Muldoon, 'Bateson Lecture', pp.119-120.

[15] Ibid., p.109. Cf. 'Letter from John Keats to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817, Romanticism: An Anthology, ed., Duncan Wu, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.1015. Cf. Wills, Reading Paul Muldoon, p.14.

[16] Seamus Heaney, 'Above the Brim: On Robert Frost', Salmagundi, No.s 88-89, Fall 1990 – Winter 1991, p.283.

[17] Kevin Barry, 'Q. & A.: Paul Muldoon', Irish Literary Supplement, Fall 1987, p.36.

[18] Muldoon, The Prince of the Quotidian, (Dublin: Gallery, 1994), p.14.

[19] Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, culture, philosophy, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.99-100. Cf. The Crane Bag, 'Editorial', Hederman & Kearney, pp.10-11.

[20] Ibid., p.107.

[21] Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.240.

[22] Iain Chambers, The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.53.

[23] Ibid., p.58.

[24] Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p.218.

[25] Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p.175. All further references are to this edition and cited in parentheses in the text.

[26] Ibid., pp.179-80. Cf. Rodolphe Gasché, The Tain of the Mirror, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p.210.

[27] Aristotle, 'The relation between the mean and its extremes', Nicomachean Ethics, trans., Martin Oswald, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), p.48.

[28] Aristotle, 'How to attain the mean', Nicomachean Ethics, pp.49-51.

[29] Muldoon, The Annals of Chile, (London: Faber, 1994), p.12.

[30] Cf. Jacques Derrida on Antonin Artaud in 'The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation', Writing and Difference, trans., Alan Bass, (London: Routledge, 1978), p.247.

[31] Ibid., pp.248-9.

[32] John Haffenden, Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation, (London: Faber, 1981), p.141.

[33] John O'Beirne Ranelagh, 'Prehistory and Legends', A Short History of Ireland, (Cambridge: U.P.,1983, 2nd ed., 1994). p.4-5.

[34] Muldoon, 'Promises, Promises', Why Brownlee Left, (London: Faber, 1980), pp.24-25.

[35] Muldoon, 'Meeting the British', Meeting the British, (London: Faber, 1987), p.16.

[36] Cf. Alfred W. Crosby, Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900, (Cambridge: University Press, 1986).

[37] Muldoon, 'The More a Man Has the More a Man Wants', New and Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), p.88.

[38] Muldoon in America, interviewed by Christopher Cook, BBC. Radio 3, 1994. Cf. Tim Kendall, Paul Muldoon, p.145.

[39] Guinn Batten, '"He Could Barely Tell One from the Other": The Borderline Disorders of Muldoon's Poetry', The South Atlantic Quarterly, Winter 1996, Vol.95, No.1, p.174.

[40] Muldoon, 'The Boundary Commission', Why Brownlee Left, (London: Faber, 1980), p.15.

[41] Tom Paulin, 'Line on the Grass', Selected Poems 1972-1990, (London: Faber, 1993), p.29.

[42] This also relates to the discussion of St. Augustine where he describes the difficulty of finding the liminal point in-death since one is either alive or dead. Cf. City of God, trans., Henry Bettenson, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp.519-20.

[43] Timothy Kearney, 'The Poetry of the North: A Post-Modernist Perspective', The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies, Mark Patrick Hederman & Richard Kearney, eds., (Dublin: Blackwater, 1982), p.466.

[44] Ibid., p.465.

[45] Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland, p.107.

[46] Muldoon, 'The More a Man Has the More a Man Wants', New and Selected Poems, p.98.

[47] Bernard O'Donoghue, 'Magic Mushrooms', rev. Paul Muldoon's Quoof, Poetry Review, No.73, Vol.4, (Jan 1984), p.53.

[48] Wills, 'The Lie of the Land: Language, Imperialism and Trade in Paul Muldoon's Meeting the British, Neil Corcoran, ed., The Chosen Ground Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland, (Pennsylvania: Dufour, 1992), pp.123-53.

[49] Muldoon, 'Identities', New Weather, (London: Faber, 1973), p.22.

[50] Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p.164.

[51] Wills, Reading Paul Muldoon, p.49.

[52] Muldoon, 'The Mixed Marriage', Mules, (London: Faber, 1977), p.42.

[53] Muldoon, 'Blemish', Mules, p.37.

[54] Wills, Reading Muldoon, p.51.

[55] Gayatri Spivak, 'Practical Politics of the Open End', The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, Sara Harasym, ed., (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.98-112.

[56] Colin Graham, ' "Defining Borders": Liminal Spaces, Post-Colonial Theories and Irish Culture', The Irish Review, No.16, (Autumn/ Winter 1994), pp.29-43, pp.31-33.

[57] Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p.241.

SECTION TWO: IRELAND, NATIONALISM & FEMINISM

THE NATIONAL BODY AND FLUID IDENTITIES

Section One was entitled 'Ireland and the Post-Colonial', and considered the ways in which male poets from the North of Ireland represent identity in terms of displacement or a dis-position that is often articulated in terms of deterritorialization as the poetry takes flight from being rooted within the place of Ulster. This resulted in noticing a tension within the poetry between being grounded and in flight which developed into discussion of Paul Muldoon's poetry in terms of a tension between gravity and transcendence. The connections between sense and nonsense, rational laws and the subversion of such laws which I explored in my discussion of Tom Paulin and Paul Klee, were developed in my exploration of Muldoon's poetry. The chapter on Muldoon questioned the politics and ethics of moves towards a dis-position in the poems, whilst exploring the hybridity that was symptomatic of both his poetry and his status as a poet from the North of Ireland. The conclusion of Section One was that in their different ways, the poets move from an essentialist politics of resistance that is typified by a decolonizing nationalist politics, in favour of a more critical dis-position akin to Homi Bhabha's post-colonial theorization and that this is an ethical responsibility resulting in a more complex understanding of identity formation.

This section will build on Section One as it outlines a tension within work by female poets between holding onto the rationale of rooted, grounded and essentialist versions of identity as resistance against chauvinism and imperialism, and an attempt

to subvert the limits of gendered and national identity. The first part of this section discusses the national body in terms of feminism within Ireland. The second part develops this discussion by referring to broader feminist debate concerning fluid identities. This provides a framework from which to read the poems of Medbh McGuckian and Eavan Boland. The first part notices the way in which Irish feminists and the critical writing of poets such as Eavan Boland problematize the possibility of establishing a coherent feminist and national identity. This involves acknowledging the different demands of feminism and nationalism within Ireland, and noticing how a national politics has risked editing out women's needs. The result of this will be discussion of how far the poets seek on the one hand, to critique and on the other, to evade the limits imposed upon them. What follows is an explication of these limits within the contexts of both the North and South of Ireland, the intersections between feminism and nationalism, and feminist and post-colonial theorization.

The National Body and Irish Feminism

In her essay 'The Women's Movement In the Republic of Ireland 1970-1990' (1993), Ailbhe Smyth notices the radicalism and direct action of women's groups who fought for 'free legal contraception', 'the removal of legal and bureaucratic obstacles to equality', 'equal pay' and 'the right of women to have a self determined sexuality'.[1] However, Smyth also alludes to the limitations imposed on women within the Republic of Ireland which has created legislation such as that against

contraception, abortion and divorce, undermining the freedom of women to have control over their bodies and lives in general. For example, the 8th Amendment to the 1937 Irish Constitution that constitutes the Abortion Act is supported by religious institutions, seeking to determine what happens within the wombs of women, with the effect of turning the woman's body into a national, political and religious territory. In her editorial "'Women's World's" and the World of Irish Women', Smyth refers to a case in 1984 where in a small provincial town in Ireland, a sixteen year old school girl and her baby died as she gave birth in the open, before a religious shrine of the Virgin Mary.

Exploring the relationship between woman and nation, the Southern Irish critic Carol Coulter attacks Eamon de Valera for being 'personally hostile to women's equality' arguing that '[w]hat actually came into being with Independence, following the Treaty, was a highly centralised state, modelled in every significant way on its colonial predecessor'.[2] Coulter does concede that religion offered a communal bond against colonial aggression but she does not draw attention to how restrictive legislation regarding Irish women also affects the lives of Irish men. For Coulter, the latter become the new enemy in the form of Fianna Fail from which women in politics.   who fought for Independence, were eventually ostracized: 'Fianna Fail, a patriarchal organization bearing little resemblance to the broad-based nationalist movement, with all its political, social and cultural diversity, that had brought women into public life'.[3] According to Coulter, the Irish Free State excluded the liberal values that motivated it in the first place. As a Southern Irish Protestant, Coulter voices concerns comparable with

many Irish Catholic women from both the North and South. Evidence of this is

found in Ailbhe Smyth's compilation of a special issue of <u>Women's Studies</u>

<u>International Forum</u>, entitled 'Feminism in Ireland' (1988) which notes how:

> Pulpits, right across the country, serve as powerful political platforms, used to
> bolster a narrow and rigid ideology concerning women: compulsory motherhood,
> guilt ridden sexuality, opposition to birth control, self-sacrifice, and economic
> dependence.[4]

However, while acknowledging the limitations of legislation within the Republic

with regard to Irish women, this section does not mean to forget the ways in which

nationalism can be viewed as connecting with a feminist drive towards a more

democratic politics. The national question did provide an opportunity in the North

for women such as Bernadette Devlin/ McAliskey to become involved in politics

and there is a point where feminist and post-colonial nationalist endeavours meet.

By way of untangling the assumptions implicit in discussion of woman and nation,

feminism and nationalism, it is important to ask how far national identity has always

been constraining for all (Irish) women across history. For example, it could be

argued that feminist and nationalist figures as different as Maud Gonne and

Bernadette Devlin, were in some ways empowered by their involvement in

nationalist concerns which, by implication, called into question both British and

male hegemony. What can be criticized, as a framework for my discussion of the

poets, is the way in which as it decolonized, the nationalism of the emerging Irish

Free State only went so far in freeing the citizens within it as it stopped at granting

equality to women.

In their introduction to <u>Gender and Colonialism</u> (1995) the editors note that

feminism and nationalism are thought of as intrinsically opposed yet there is a

problem with this as it seems to rule out the possibility of an effective counter-

hegemonic alliance. However, they acknowledge how numerous anti-colonial

movements 'repeat the gender stereotyping of the imperialism that they seek to over

turn'. In other words, between the categories of gender and colonialism there is

neither absolute equivalence nor absolute opposition.[5] Black and 'Third World'

feminists such as Lata Mani, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Sara Suleri and Gayatri

Spivak have drawn attention to how far white feminist eurocentric discourses still

tend to universalize, ignoring the cultural specificity of women in ways that are

comparable with imperialism.[6] This is an important point for Irish feminists from a

country that has been positioned at the raw end of colonialism. It also draws

attention to how an affiliation to the Catholic Church may be an expression of

cultural specificity or national identity for some Irish women, whereas for others, it

is an indication of their oppression as women.

It is important not to ignore that the situation for Irish women in the North of

Ireland under British rule is no better since they often become the double victims of

both imperialism and patriarchy. Bairbre De Brún from Sinn Fein's cultural office

has argued in her essay 'Women and Imperialism in Ireland' (1988), that in the Six

Counties, particularly in areas where a majority of the people are opposed to British

rule, some Irish women experience oppression both as women and as members of a

colonised people. It would also be true to say that many Northern women who are

sympathetic to nationalism are nonetheless concerned as to what would happen to

their rights as women in a United Ireland. De Brún explains how there are 'gains

and losses' for women in both Northern and Southern systems. Moreover, she

concludes that overall the advances made by women are 'no greater in one part of the country than the other'.[7]

In spite of the difficulties for feminism in both the North and South of Ireland which it might be assumed would bring Irish women together, it is important to notice how the national question divides women's groups. Bearing in mind the political differences between women, the notion of border transgression may seem at best utopian. Understanding gendered national identity is also a matter of considering the Partition, the separate Irish contexts and different women living in Ireland. As the feminine is connected with the national, there is difficulty establishing a coherent identity from which Irish feminism stands. For instance, the politics, economics and legislative environments of Southern Irish feminists are not always comparable with those of Northern feminists. For women in the North of Ireland there are difficulties with finding a neutral space in which to discuss women's issues in a community divided by sectarianism. However, to disavow points of connection for feminists is to fall into the trap of disallowing women the agency involved with saying "we". Moreover, to argue that the delimited positioning of some Irish women who are victims of both patriarchy and imperialism cannot be transgressed or undermined, and that no alternative can be imagined, is to deny the possibility of resistance. Yet as with the nationalist problematic of decolonization, feminist moves to speak for "us" risk submerging difference.

In her essay 'From Cathleen to Anorexia' (1994), the Northern unionist writer, Edna Longley, explores the debilitating nature of the sexualization of political identity. Longley makes a point of comparison between women from different

races, religions and political background as she argues that whatever their

differences, Irish women are similar in terms of their positioning at the raw end of

patriarchy as the 'Ulster Protestant community, though dragged forward faster by

Westminster legislation, is as traditionally patriarchal as Catholic nationalism'.[8]

There is a colonial mentality lurking in Longley's statement as she imagines the

legislation of Westminster as more modern and progressive than the legislation of

Dublin. Moreover, there are significant differences between the politics of

Gerardine Meaney from the South and the Belfast based Unionist position of

Longley. Even so, it is notable how Meaney's discussion joins with that of Longley

above, when she explains how the whole country abounds in Ancient orders of

Hibernian male bonding. Meaney, who has spent some time in Belfast, comments

that Unionism is 'equally prey to the sexualization of political identity'. She writes:

'Whatever other divisions there are, Ireland, North and South, is united in its denial

of women's rights to choose'.[9] Meaney's pamphlet Sex and Nation (1991) argues,

as has Richard Kearney in Myth and Motherland (1984), that the Irish woman is the

terrain over which power is exercised.

In her essay, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi' (1989), Ailbhe Smyth also notes how the

history of colonization in Ireland has been one of feminization.[10] Focusing on the

statue of Joyce's Anna Livia Plurabelle in Dublin, Smyth investigates the disabling

impact of the iconized female for Irish women who are presented as colonized by

imperialist, nationalist and chauvinist discourses. As Molly Mullin notices,

struggles over historical representation are also struggles over identities.[11] Smyth's

challenge is to culturally encoded historical knowledge so as to contest received

definitions and modes of representation of women in an effort to revalorize the

feminine. Comparably, in her 1989 pamphlet 'A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in

a National Tradition', the Southern Irish poet Eavan Boland has alluded to the

'power of nationhood to edit the reality of womanhood'.[12] Boland sets out in her

essays to question a culture of male oriented nationalism which tended to position

the feminine 'Outside History' in either a public symbolic role as Mother Ireland or

in a more private female realm of motherhood. Hence, Boland challenges the

'rhetoric of imagery which alienated me: a fusion of the national and the feminine

which seemed to simplify both'.[13] In Myth and Motherland (1984), Kearney argues

that 'if we need to demythologize, we need to remythologize'.[14] A further question

of this section will be whether the poets remythologize the representation of woman

and nation, and the body and space in their poetry. If so, how far is the old story of

Mother Ireland being relocated and reconstructed, and are Irish women poets

undertaking a similar project?

In Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry (1993) Clair

Wills has asked: "Where femininity stands as symbol of the nation, how can woman

'consume' the symbol without 'erasing' herself?"[15] Smyth's 'Floozie in the Jacuzzi'

also problematizes this erasure of the female in terms of the definitions of gender

and nation. For example, Smyth compares the definitions of 'Irishism', 'Woman'

and 'Identity' to argue that at a conceptual level, Irish and female identities have

been presented in terms of lapses, the in-between or undefined:

> *Irishism* (Roget) paradox sophism equivocation nonsense untruth error lapsus
> linguae
> *Woman* (Aristotle/Aquinas/Freud/Lacan) defect lack absence lapsus linguae

> *Identity* tautology, id-entity non-entity in-sense non-sense ab-sense sense absconded.[16]

The definitions of 'Woman' and nationality drawn on by Smyth come from Aristotle, Aquinas, Freud and Lacan, who are <u>male</u> theorists or philosophers from different places <u>outside</u> Ireland, become a working example of the problem with establishing a common ground from which Irish feminism can be understood. It is just as problematic to imply that 'Irishism' can apply to the heterogeneous communities living in Ireland as it is to rely on male definitions of 'Woman'. Smyth's definitions also demonstrate how both Irishness and femininity have been assessed in terms of 'non-sense', the irrational and emotional, and it is to this that I will turn in relation to McGuckian's 'pointless' and secretive poetry as it defies straightforward readings. This will take my discussion of délire in the poems of Paulin and Muldoon into a feminist criticism of McGuckian's poems.

In spite of the problems involved with male explanations of female identity, both Ailbhe Smyth and Gerardine Meaney have drawn on the work of Freud and Lacan in relation to feminists such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. As the section explores the poetry of Medbh McGuckian from the North and Eavan Boland from the South, it will ask how far their poetry provides a sensible foundational feminist territory from which to stand, and whether the poetry moves into the sensual realms of a nonsensical fluid subjectivity outlined, in particular, by Julia Kristeva. My use of Kristeva will be critical as I explore the poetry in terms of her theorization of female identity, whilst bearing in mind the limitations of such theorization which have been indicated by Nancy Fraser and Judith Butler.[17] The point of this will be not to totally refute Kristeva, but to see how her theorization

affects readings of the poetry and how in view of the poetry, Kristeva's theorization

may be resituated and developed.

The section will locate the poetry in terms of a history of feminist criticism within

Ireland, while asking how far the female poets move to more secular versions of

identity that lie beyond preoccupations with the national and his-torical as we know

it. When the body of the Irish nation has been feminized in terms of the icons

Mother Ireland and Cathleen Ní Houlihan, how far do Irish women poets abandon

conventional maps of the national body in order to chart a less sacred, more fluid,

less grounded and less delimited elsewhere with improper narratives such as those

alluded to by Clair Wills in Improprieties (1993)? In answer to this question, this

section will argue that the poets oscillate between being grounded by the national

and imaginative transcendence into more fluid subjectivities in an attempt to destroy

the ideological limits that seek to confine them in the first place. In relation to this,

the section will explore the work of each poet, asking what are the politics of an

attempt to deterritorialize and noticing how an anti-foundational stance results not

only in a move away from colonial delimitation of space but also undermines the

foundations of patriarchal 'control' over the female body.

Smyth reads the Irish woman as 'the other' who is twice dispossessed by

colonialism and by chauvinism: 'The Irish Woman' enables a definition of 'The

Irish Man' in a way that is evocative of the colonial subject acting as 'other' for the

self definition of the colonizer. The power of the centre to name or define 'the

other' is acknowledged by Smyth when she writes: 'I am at the edge, defining the

centre, Border country. Margin, Perimeter, Outside'.[18] As Smyth problematically

equates the margin with the outside, she suggests that the feminine is an exiled

element and not even humanized. If what is Irish and female falls into the gap of the

non-identifiable then she has not yet been fully represented. This is different from

Fanon's point of re-identification as 'other' whereby 'the other' can be named.[19] On

the one hand, Smyth's comment erases the possibility of a space in language from

which an Irish woman can represent herself. Smyth's problem is not that there is a

crisis of identity for the female subject but rather that she has never been considered

as a subject to begin with. On the other hand, according to Smyth's analysis, as

something that has not yet been identified, 'woman' is not contained by

representation which hints at her transgressive potential since that which has not yet

been fully named is uncontainable, allusive and uncontrollable. Smyth's argument,

then, operates in terms of a paradox: the Irish woman is named as 'other' yet in this

way, she is not named and this bears testimony to both her dispossession and her

agency.

As Smyth's essay implies, it is problematic to place women beyond representation

in a mute realm of non-identity; especially when Smyth's essay never stops naming

'the Irish woman'. Smyth develops her argument as she draws on the figure of Anna

Livia Plurabelle to demonstrate a cruel, insane, mocking contradiction of the

circumscribed realities of Irish women which is hardly one of plurability.[20] She asks

when 'Woman' signifies/ anything, everything and nothing,/ how can women

signify?'[21] Answering this question, I will draw on Kristeva's work as she makes

connections between the feminine and fluid meaning.

Fluid Identities and Feminism Beyond Ireland

Kristeva explores via psychoanalysis a maternal sea which is imagined as a pre-linguistic semiotic realm that is unheimlich and an unrepresentable space. This is outlined in her essay 'Women's Time' (1979) where she describes female time as fluid, cyclical and outside the linear progression of History. Female time is thought in terms of 'repetition and eternity', 'cycles', 'gestation' and the 'eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature ... whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertigious and unnameable jouissance'.[22] Kristeva positions this against 'history', the time of progression, 'time as project', 'time as departure, progression and arrival'. Her idea of woman's time evades the understanding of History in terms of progress or modernity. For Kristeva, History is a sacred and sacrificial time which is part and parcel of 'language' and the 'enunciation of sentences' with 'a beginning' and 'ending'. Kristeva's identification of the tension between a secular, unnameable and playful time, and a sacred, Symbolic and lawful time will be discussed with reference to the poems of McGuckian and Boland.

Nancy Fraser has noticed problems with Kristeva's analysis as it relies on the structuralist narratives of Freudian and Lacanian versions of psychoanalysis which attribute gender to certain modes of reasoning or loss of reasoning, whereby the feminine becomes associated with lack and the irrational. Fraser notices how Kristeva deconstructs and decentres feminine identity using the structuralist tools of psychoanalysis which results in an internalization of the patriarchal repression imposed on women by Freud's investigations. She argues that this results in

essentialism, biologism and a refusal to recognize the differences between women.[23]

Fraser's argument is persuasive as is her refusal of Kristeva's essentialism over what

constitutes women's time and a female space. She argues that Kristeva's analysis

cannot be used effectively due to the differences between the socialization of women

from diverse histories, classes, ethnicities and sexual orientation. For Fraser,

Kristeva's analysis becomes a working example of how patriarchal oppression tends

to turn all women into the same as they are represented as 'the other'. The

psychoanalytic story cannot easily be proven and it does become an article of Faith.

But whether fact or fiction, my interest is in the way that Kristeva's discussion can

be used as a way of assessing the representation of fluid identities, times and spaces

within the poetry, which in turn problematizes the way in which the identity politics

of Irish women's poetry can be read. My use of Kristeva does not intend to valorize

her theorization as a manual for feminist politics, but rather to notice moments of

intersection between her imagined female realm and the female spaces presented

within the poems, and to ask how Kristeva's theorization can be developed in the

light of the poetry.

In spite of objections to psychoanalysis, it is noticeable how psychoanalytic

understandings of feminism have affected Ailbhe Smyth and Gerardine Meaney's

theorization of the identities of Irish women. In relation to their work, I will ask

whether each of the Irish women poets I am discussing can be easily labelled as

feminist or as writing out a female territory while exploring what such a territory

may be. For example, could McGuckian's poetic attention to female experience and

her allusive poetic style be read as creating an _écriture féminine_ and what are the

implications of this? In answer to questions regarding women's writing, the

Southern Irish poet Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill has argued that use of the Irish mother

tongue constitutes 'the only escape route from the male language' since, in a country

which has been feminized, Irish is conceived of as 'the language of our mothers'.[24]

Ní Dhomhnaill views the utterance of English language as an internalization of

patriarchy and colonization which is comparable with the concerns of both Seamus

Heaney and Seamus Deane in their work for Field Day, and in poems such as 'The

Ministry of Fear' which Heaney dedicated to Deane.[25] This line of thought connects

feminism with nationalist resistance as the English tongue is imagined as not only

imperialist but also male, thus evading the ways in which Irish culture is also

plagued by patriarchal domination and the problematics involved with gendering

Ireland as a female victim.

Gerardine Meaney indicates that due to the unfortunate dwindling of Irish as a

national language, the notion of the Irish language as mother tongue provides a

narrow space of resistance for Irish women, excluding those who are non-Irish

speaking and the Anglo-Irish.[26] In this way, Meaney moves from ethnic to cultural

nationalism. A further problem aside from the gendering of Ireland is how Irish can

be conceived of as a mother or feminine tongue, when the bardic tradition is

predominantly male. There is also the contention that the notion of a feminine

tongue risks forming another strait -jacket which does not allow for the diversity

and differences between female writers. In this way, feminist promotion of an

écriture féminine becomes a globalizing gesture. The problem remains for feminists

to assert their different identities in a move towards a politics of difference yet still

retaining enough of a group identity 'as women' so as to resist patriarchal

subjugation. In this way, the identity politics of feminism and post-colonialism face

similar difficulties as they are readjusted by postmodern strategies which move

towards a politics of difference by way of drawing attention to the limitations of

essentialism.[27] However, postmodern strategies also threaten the resistance of

marginalized groups as essentialist notions of group identity are deconstructed and

undermined.[28]

There is a point then, where feminism and post-colonial agendas merge. In 'The

Laugh of the Medusa' (1976), Hélène Cixous makes a problematic connection

between the othering of woman and the othering of Africans, as women have been

kept in the 'dark' and conceived of as dark.[29] Cixous is defiant as she addresses men

in their relation to women:

> You can incarcerate them, slow them down, get away with the old Apartheid
> routine, but for time only. As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time they are
> taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are
> Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see
> anything in the dark. Don't move, you might fall, most of all, don't go into the
> forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark.[30]

Freud's dark continent is seen as a masculine construct which colonizes women.

However, Cixous's analogy (re)appropriates Africa and Africans equating them with

women which is equally problematic since it merges the differences between

colonial and patriarchal exploitation in the way that the gendering of Ireland does.

What is interesting here, is how the Medusa is located on the verge of the abyss, in a

'frontier land toward night' or unenlightened territory on the edge where we fear to

fall. In my readings of the poems, I will explore how the notion of writing from the

frontier is used in feminist and post-colonial theorization, and has implications for

representations of gender and nation, which develops understanding of the position of Irish women poets and builds on the discussion of borderline disorders from Section One. This will involve an exploration of deterritorialization and the transgression of boundaries within the poetry which will develop my former discussion of the male poets Heaney, Paulin and Muldoon, taking us in the direction of feminist criticism and its impact on the post-colonial.

A problem with Cixous's argument is that she totalizes patriarchy and imperialism in order to rally women to fight against essentialism. In waging war against totality, Cixous must first totalize men and colonials. Considering, however, the history of victimization of women and colonial subjects, it is not difficult for Cixous to claim that chauvinism and racism are forces with which to be reckoned. She opens the 'Laugh of the Medusa' (1976) imploring that a woman 'write her self'. This self is found in the female body that has been censored as another place, apart from the Symbolic realm of language that, according to Cixous, has been governed by the phallus.[31] Cixous imagines that the female is placed into an inarticulate semiotic or pre-linguistic realm of bodily functions while the male is positioned within the articulate and representable. This leads back to Ailbhe Smyth's question of what space has the woman from which to speak herself? Cixous answers this question as she rallies women to write and create a her-story invoking the dark unknowable spaces of the female body rather than a his-story that edits out darkness, the nonsensical and the emotional in favour of enlightenment, sense and reason. Cixous implies that this challenges the conventions of chauvinism and colonialism which

she views as sharing the same rationale of subjugating anything that is 'other' to their self image.

Such a move towards writing her-story will be explored in relation to McGuckian and Boland's representation of the female body. According to Cixous, in spite of the differences between women, an emancipatory discourse is to be achieved by invoking the female body in women's writing since this is the one territory women have in common. The bodily border from which women are supposed to write is worth investigating further: I will argue that feminist theorization of the body develops readings of the women poets, and becomes a point of contrast between their poetry and that of the male poets in Section One. By way of exploring the bodily borders represented in the poems, it is necessary to go into some detail of how Kristeva draws on Lacan's theorization of the subject's entrance into language so as to explore the relationship between female subjects and the Symbolic.

There are problems involved when a feminist draws on male psychoanalytic theorists which have been outlined by Fraser. Kristeva argues in her essay, 'Women's Time' that women in particular have a sacrificial relationship with the socio-symbolic contract. Kristeva describes the revolt of a new generation of female artists who attempt 'to break the code, to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnamenable repressed by the social contract'.[32] Kristeva draws a line between sense and sensibility, an enlightenment rationale and an emotional romanticism, and men and women, noting that it is there for the crossing. Kristeva's analysis of feminine language then, makes a clear connection between the irrational, emotional, sensuous and nonsensical. A

strategy of resistance risks conforming to the stereotypes of women being somehow more irrational, emotional and corporal than men, and it also places women outside of the social.

Kristeva runs into more difficulties when she imagines women attempting to construct alternatives since this creates the notion of a counter-society where the excluded element is male. However, Kristeva cannot let go of a 'female society' as 'the only refuge for fulfillment since it is precisely an a-topia, a place outside the law, utopia's floodgate'.[33] Kristeva imagines an alternative time and space for women outside of the laws of the Symbolic, and she imagines this in terms of the fluid workings of the female body as opposed to phallic straightforwardness or the masculine. While at a rational level Kristeva concedes to the pitfalls of her development of the psychoanalytic theorization of Lacan, she still intuitively pursues her imaginative vision of not an utopia but a female 'a-topia'. The imagery drawn on by Kristeva to describe the semiotic at the edge of space as we know it is telling.

For instance, she imagines the 'floodgate' as a barrier that holds back a destructive, fluid and implicitly feminine tide which threatens the name of the Father or the Law. The 'floodgate' is a thetic border that is at the site of division between the semiotic and Symbolic realms. In her essay 'History and Women's Time' which explores the work of Julia Kristeva, Gerardine Meaney cites the significance of the thetic border in psychoanalytic theory as 'a site of subversion and change'.[34] This is similar to Cixous's notion that: 'writing is the very possibility of change. That is, a space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought'.[35] Writing at the margins or from the border is viewed by Cixous as challenging the centre, in

particular, the phallogocentric or the centre of culture that has been traditionally

dominated by men and imperialists – to deny this would be to forget a history of

chauvinism and racism.

Cixous identifies the transgressive practices of writing as feminine. Meaney

argues that all language evades every authorial strategy, and remains the last and

inviolable residue of darkness, the territory of the mother which ... cannot be

occupied.[36] In Kristeva's essay 'Revolution in Poetic Language' (1974), poetry,

whether penned by male or female, is viewed as being haunted by a semiotic, pre-

Oedipal and maternal space that is resistant to colonization.[37] This space precedes

the Symbolic realm of representation. Kristeva's work suggests that the so called

rational, Symbolic law is actually what is irrational in the way it attempts to edit out

alterity. This is important because it suggests that men as well as women are

dispossessed of themselves by the Symbolic and its laws, although the extent of their

dispossession within society is hardly the same. As studies of James Joyce have

argued, a feminine writing need not have a female author, which may, at a simplistic

level, raise questions about the validity of l'écriture féminine as emancipating for

women writers when it is written by men.[38] More importantly, it notices how a

sensual and less sensible experience lies on the edges of the rational for both

genders. What Kristeva attacks is a whole history of philosophy that has sought to

make sense of, and thus control, the world. In 'Women's Time', Kristeva imagines

the female writer in her relation to literature which is viewed as redoubling the social

contract by exposing the unsaid or the uncanny.[39] Her argument takes us a step

further as it suggests that not only the female writer but writing in general renders

the Symbolic strange to itself or unheimlich. In this way, the Symbolic becomes an

opening into the very semiotic space that it attempts to cover and the supposedly

sensible moves into the limitless realms of the non-sensical.

In 'Revolution in Poetic Language' Kristeva explains how the thetic phase is

necessary for signification since it is the threshold of language.[40] Semiotic motility

or a pre-linguistic unrepresentable is connected with a pre-Oedipal and maternal

body, and it is the dark place of 'the other' which Cixous imagines as the

precondition of signification.[41] Kristeva takes these theories even further suggesting

that poetry is a-theological and creates an instance in language where the semiotic or

unrepresentable tears open the Symbolic realm of linguistic representation and this

transgression brings about various transformations of the signifying process called

"creation".[42] Basically, in Kristeva's analysis, poetic language is conceived of as

feminine, unruly and disruptive. According to this view, poetry by either the male

or female poet admits the 'dark' space of the sublime, the subliminal or the

unrepresentable. As it writes at the limits of language, poetry marks a breach into

the thetic allowing the semiotic into the Symbolic.[43] Kristeva conceives of the

thetic in terms of the subliminal or bodily limits that connect with notions of the

sublime or the edge of representation at the edge of what cannot be conceived; the

line before an uncolonizable void. In this way, her analysis looks to a saved non-

space as a strategy of resistance against the inscriptions of patriarchy.

In Gender Trouble (1990) Judith Butler outlines the limits of psychoanalytic

perspectives and identifies problems with Kristeva's notion of a semiotic dimension

of language which is occasioned by the primary maternal body that serves as a

perpetual source of subversion within the Symbolic realm of representational

discourse.[44] She asks how far can the maternal body bear meanings prior to culture

when motherhood is often idealized by culture? Seen in this way, Kristeva's model

safeguards paternal and heterosexual structures of culture. Butler questions

Kristeva's use of Lacan's model of the primary relationship with the maternal body

asking whether this is a viable construct and whether this is a knowable experience

according to their linguistic theories. Butler asks: 'If the semiotic promotes the

possibility of the subversion, displacement, or disruption of the paternal law, what

meanings can these terms have if the Symbolic always reasserts its hegemony?'[45]

The semiotic experience cannot be maintained within linguistic law and its sustained

presence within culture leads to psychosis and the breakdown of cultural life.

Therefore, Butler asks how far Kristeva's construction of the semiotic can be useful

as an emancipatory ideal and this is a problem that I will consider in relation to the

semiotic seas alluded to in the imagery of the women poets.

Butler challenges the foundationalist frames into which she views Kristeva's

analysis slipping but she does not entirely dismiss Kristeva's thought as does Nancy

Fraser. Butler's assessment of Kristeva leads her to an important conclusion in

Bodies That Matter (1993):

> Although the political discourses that mobilize identity categories tend to cultivate
> identifications in the service of a political goal, it may be that the persistence of
> disidentification is equally crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation.[46]

Rejecting foundational thought in favour of disidentification, Butler argues that

'paradoxically "representation" will be shown to make sense for feminism only

when the subject of "women" is nowhere presumed'.[47] Butler's concept of

disidentification whereby 'the subject of "women" is nowhere presumed' will be central to my readings of the female poets in this section. Whereas Smyth lamented the ways in which the female non-subject is never a subject, Butler utilizes this point of non-identification as a strategy of resistance with her concept of a feminist disidentification that constitutes a more critical consciousness of the construction of identity. The above quotation from Butler also highlights the triple meaning of the word 'subject' which can mean 'topic', 'any person owing obedience to another' and 'a thinking or feeling entity with a conscious mind'.[48] The play on the word 'subject' demonstrates the way in which identity or 'subjectivity' can be tied to 'subjection'. Whereas Kristeva notices that a non-identifiable void is the only space that resists colonization, Butler more fruitfully looks to disidentification and the 'outsiders' at the 'tenuous borders' of representation who 'counter the boundaries of discourse'. This disidentification takes further the notion of disposition which I argued for in my discussion of Paul Muldoon in Section One since it moves from critiquing the positioning of the subject, to critiquing the way in which identity positions the subject. Butler's comment also provides a further example of how feminist and post-colonial theorization of identity meets. Her discussion of disidentification as 'crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation' could easily have been penned by Homi Bhabha with reference to the post-colonial.

In this way, Butler does not entirely destroy Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories in the way that Fraser tends to do since, as she uses and abuses Kristeva's work, she concludes that attention to the 'outside' or 'outsiders' of culture recasts the Symbolic or the centre of representation that represses others, casting them to the periphery.[49]

This comment has developed and changed Kristeva's terms, taking Butler's analysis beyond psychoanalysis and into the terrain of establishing a politics of resistance for groups that have been marginalized. Where Butler claims to differ from Kristeva is in her argument that freedom comes not through the notion of a semiotic, utopian or a-topian beyond, but through the subversion of constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundations of identity.[50] This antagonistic and anti-foundational stance against 'constitutive categories' provides Butler with ammunition for the reconfiguration of identity politics in terms of disidentification which is comparable with the strategies of resistance undertaken by Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Hence, I will ask how far female Irish poets look to a utopian beyond or tabula rasa, and how far their poetry writes from the margins so as to constitute an antagonistic stance towards oppression.

It would follow from Butler's analysis that writing from the periphery becomes a transgressive practice that challenges the limits of language and representation, the boundaries of the body and space. In the Irish context this translates as a challenge to the delimited representation of 'Woman' and 'Nation', and by implication, the ideological frontiers of a feminized Irish national territory. This analysis does not mean to obscure the specific boundaries or confines for women, but it does intend to discuss the common confines and marginalized status faced by Irish woman writers, and to make connections between the poets who are being discussed. At the end of 'Women's Time', Kristeva describes avant-garde feminists who look for a fluid subjectivity away from delimited versions of identity which would say: 'Women are this ...'[51] However, the representation of fluid identities is still a construction of

sorts in which the feminine is situated and defined. Thinking female identities in terms of the semiotic, feminine bodily fluids and maternal seas, Kristeva paradoxically locates female identity within a foundation of the anti-foundational or a structure of deconstruction.

The following chapters on the women poets will address how Medbh McGuckian, Eavan Boland and Sara Berkeley connect and contradict with Kristeva and Butler's analyses. I will explore how the issues of women and nation, body and space, gendered and national identity, raised in this introduction, come together in poetry by Irish women poets, in order to notice how the body of the nation is transgressed and reinvented within their work. Points of comparison will also be made between deterritorialization in the work of the female poets and that of the male poets who were discussed in Section One. While noticing similarities between the male and female poets from the North and the South, the section will also outline in what ways they differ from one another. The thrust of commentary in this section will be to argue that the dis-positions and deterritorialization identified in the work of Muldoon, Paulin and Heaney in Section One, are taken further by the women poets with far more complex political and ethical consequences. Bearing this statement in mind, the following chapter will explore the way that nomadic female subjectivity in McGuckian's poetry becomes an agent of resistance, asking how her poetry seeks to escape from the constricting claws of not only patriarchy and imperialism but also her interpreters. This will result in discussion of what are the politics of an aesthetics that confronts the void and seeks to defy understanding.

'Notes to Section Two'

[1] Ailbhe Smyth, 'The Women's Movement In Republic of Ireland', in Smyth, ed., Irish Women's Studies Reader, (Dublin: Attic, 1993), p.258.

[2] Carol Coulter, 'Introduction', The Hidden Tradition, (Cork: University Press, 1993), p.23.

[3] Ibid., p.25.

[4] Ailbhe Smyth, ed., 'Feminism in Ireland' & 'Editorial "Women's Worlds" and the Worlds of Irish Women', Women's Studies International Forum, Vol.11, No.4, (1988), p.318.

[5] Timothy Foley, Lionel Pilkington, Sean Ryder, Elizabeth Tilley, Gender and Colonialism, (Galway: University Press, 1995), pp.9-10.

[6] Cf. 'Theorising Gender', and 'Theorizing Post-Coloniality and Identity', Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory, eds., Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, (London: Harvester, 1993). Originally, this thesis wanted to compare discussion of gendered national identity within Ireland with that of feminist and post-colonial theorists outside of Ireland. Unfortunately, this would deflect from the main arguments of the thesis and the focus on Irish poetry. There needs to be far more research undertaken in this field and I regret not having space for it here.

[7] Bairbre De Brún, 'Women and imperialism in Ireland', Women's Studies International Forum, p.324.

[8] Edna Longley, 'From Cathleen To Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands', The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994), p.187.

[9] Gerardine Meaney, Sex and Nation: Women In Irish Culture and Politics, (Dublin: Attic, 1991), p.11, p.10.

[10] Meaney, Sex and Nation, p.7; Ailbhe Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', The Irish Review, Vol.6, (1989), pp.7-21.

[11] Molly Mullin, 'Representations of History, Irish Feminism and the Politics of Difference', Feminist Studies, Vol.17, No.1, Spring 1991, pp.29-50.

[12] Eavan Boland, 'A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition', Studies, 76, (Summer, 1987), p.152.

[13] Boland, 'Outside History', PN Review, Vol.17, No.1, Sept/October, 1990, p.22.

[14] Richard Kearney, Myth and Motherland, A Field Day Pamphlet, No.5, (Derry: Field Day, 1984), p.22.

[15] Clair Wills, 'Women Poets', Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry, (Oxford: University Press, 1993), p.52.

[16] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', pp.14-15

[17] Cf. Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (London: Routledge, 1990) and Bodies That Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex", (London: Routledge, 1993). Nancy Fraser, Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays On Difference, (Indiana: University Press, 1991).

[18] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', p.21.

[19] Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, (London: Pluto, 1986, 1993).

[20] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', p.8.

[21] Ibid., p.11.

[22] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', The Kristeva Reader, ed., Toril Moi, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.187-214.

[23] Fraser, Revaluing French Feminism, pp.1-24.

[24] Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'What Foremothers?', The Comic Tradition in Irish Women Writers, (Florida: University Press, 1996), pp.8-20.

[25] Seamus Heaney, Selected Poems 1965-1975, (London: Faber 1980), pp.129-31.

[26] Meaney, Sex and Nation, p.21.

[27] Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, 'One Of The Things At Stake In Women's Struggles', The Lyotard Reader, ed., Andrew Benjamin, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp.111-22.

[28] Cf. Linda Nicholson, Feminism/ Postmodernism, (London: Routledge, 1990) and Sabina Lovibond, 'Feminism and Postmodernism', Postmodernism: A Reader, ed., Thomas Docherty, (London: Harvester, 1993), pp.390-415.

[29] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', Literature in the Modern World, ed., Dennis Walder, (Oxford: University Press, 1990), p.316.

[30] Ibid., p.318.

[31] Ibid., p.321.

[32] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', p.199.

[33] Ibid., p.202.

[34] Meaney, (Un)like Subjects: Women, Theory and Fiction, (London: Routledge, 1993), p.89.

[35] Cixous, 'Laugh of Medussa', pp.319-20.

[36] Meaney, (Un)like Subjects, p.75.

[37] Kristeva, 'Revolution in Poetic Language', The Kristeva Reader, pp.89-123.

[38] Bonnie Kime Scott, Joyce and Feminism, (Brighton: Harvester, 1984). Cf. Cixous, L'exil de James Joyce ou l'art du remplacement, thesis for Doctorat d'État, (Publications de la Faculté des lettres et sciences de Paris-Sorbonne: Grasset, second edn, 1985).

[39] Kristeva, 'Women's Time', p.207.

[40] Kristeva, 'Revolution in Poetic Language', p.99.

[41] Ibid., p.102.

[42] Ibid., p.113.

[43] Ibid., p.118.

[44] Butler, Gender Trouble, p.80.

[45] Ibid., p.80.

[46] Butler, Bodies That Matter, p.4.

[47] Butler, Gender Trouble, p.6.

[48] The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th Edition, ed., Della Thompson, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p.1387

[49] Butler, Bodies That Matter, p.22.

[50] Butler, Gender Trouble ,p.33.

[51] Kristeva, 'Women's Time', p.208.

CHAPTER FOUR

PLAYING CACHE-CACHE: MEDBH MCGUCKIAN'S DISIDENTIFICATION

I appeal to the God who fashions edges
Whether such turning-points exist

Medbh McGuckian, 'The Soil-Map', The Flower Master, (1982).[1]

McGuckian, Feminism and the Post-Colonial

In his essay 'Postmodern McGuckian' (1992) Thomas Docherty suggests that '[i]t

has become fashionable to read McGuckian as a poet whose language, grammar, and

syntax all serve to question masculinism, and to see her as a poet in a literary lineage

deriving from Joyce's Molly'.[2] Here, Docherty implies that certain feminist readings

of McGuckian, which remain uncited in his essay, are merely 'fashionable' and his

comment problematizes such a mode of criticism as he argues that McGuckian has

been assessed as a poet in a literary lineage deriving from James Joyce's

construction of Molly Bloom. This example has two main functions: first, it

undermines simple understandings of l'écriture feminine by suggesting that since

Joyce has been considered 'writing the feminine', this can hardly be considered an

exclusively female practice because male writers do it too; second, this statement

imagines that feminist critics of McGuckian's work understand her in terms of a

male tradition which has created a mode of 'feminine writing' with which they are

complicit and which would hardly constitute a critique of male conceptions of

women, although the case is hardly this simple if we read Clair Wills, Mary

O'Connor, Eileen Cahill, Peggy O'Brien, Ann Beer, Kathleen McCracken and Susan Porter.[3] As Docherty suggests that feminist criticism of McGuckian amounts to understanding that her work questions masculinism as much as does Molly who is a male creation, he implies that a certain kind of feminist criticism is short-sighted and has no real agency.

However, in her doctoral thesis on Joyce, Hélène Cixous addresses the questions of how a male creation of 'the feminine', such as Molly Bloom, can possibly undermine masculinism and what impact this has on feminism, which is a question that can also be problematized in terms of Joyce's positioning as a post-colonial writer.[4] In his essay Docherty deflects attention from the intricacies of his example of Molly by shifting his debate to seeing McGuckian as being like Emily Dickinson, 'a keen reader of the dictionary'. He concludes that this is 'strong circumstantial evidence' that the following lines from the poem 'Aviary' (1984):

> You call me aspen, tree of the woman's
> Tongue, but if my longer and longer sentences
> Prove me wholly female, I'd be persimmon,
> And good kindling, to us both.[5]

> ... were dictated not by any specifically feminist intention preceding the poem, but rather by a reading of the dictionary.[6]

However, it is precisely by reading the dictionary that McGuckian's poetry demonstrates her feminist intentions whereby the Symbolic realm is found not to be straightforward or rational, as meaning and metaphor are infinitely deferred and dispersed, and her poetry provides us with a slippery and delirious space of irreducible differences. Kristeva's 'Revolution in Poetic Language' (1974) develops

these concerns as she gets to a view of poetic language that makes small ambushes at the limits of signification with the effect of challenging rational, totalizing and sensible modes of representation; and it is to this sabotage of the Symbolic that she aligns a feminist politics. This does not entail consigning women to a mute and semiotic space as Nancy Fraser has imagined; what Kristeva's essay does is to notice the ways in which 'rational' claims to meaning which have traditionally been gendered as male, can be changed and undermined. This has a political impact for both genders since to challenge the rational claims of patriarchy is to open up a whole can of worms, or in McGuckian's case, snakes.

The title, 'Aviary', can be read in terms of a joke about how men refer to women as 'birds', and of course, an aviary is a place in which birds/ women are kept enclosed. McGuckian's etymology in the poem leads her to make links between an 'aspen tongue', the Old English 'æspe' or 'asp' from which 'aspen' derives, 'the tongue of a woman', 'aspen' as 'a poplar tree with especially tremulous leaves' and a 'persimmon' or 'evergreen tree bearing edible pulpy orange fruits' which is connected with her 'wholly female' 'longer sentences'.[7] Historically, women have been considered (usually by men) to be very poor at grammar and a feminine line is characterized as one that rambles and fails to operate in terms of the usual grammatical laws; an example of this is found in Percy Shelley's editing of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1831) which unfortunately cannot be discussed at length here.[8] Reading the dictionary, McGuckian's feminist intention in 'Aviary' is to produce a snaky poetic uttered by the forked or 'aspen tongue' 'of a woman' whose 'degree of falsehood' questions rational modes of thinking to which the male gender

has been attributed, while problematizing communication between female and male, whereby she characterizes a 'difficult daughter' and a'cache-/ Enfant against all men'. From the French verb 'cacher', with its meanings of secrecy, masking and hiding, 'cache-/ Enfant' is a useful name for McGuckian's playful, protective and childish 'cache-cache' poetic. 'Cache-cache' refers to the game of hide-and-seek which is evocative of McGuckian's secretive poetics. As a compound noun that is not listed in either monolingual or bilingual dictionaries, the word 'cache-/ Enfant' must be either little used or a neologism.[9] It could translate as 'hidden-child', yet the way French compound nouns preceded by 'cache' usually work (such as cache-col, cache-nez or cache-pot) suggests that a 'cache-/ Enfant' could be either a child protector or a reference to a hidden pregnancy. In this poem, there is more than 'some truth' in readings of McGuckian's poetry in terms of feminism and questioning masculinism, and more to it than seeing her as a modern day Molly Bloom.

From his reading of 'Aviary', Docherty follows a 'hunch' that McGuckian's poetry is more 'postmodern' than it is feminist. 'Postmodern McGuckian' is useful because it is reactionary; as it disclaims feminist readings of McGuckian in favour of the postmodern, the essay is haunted by an understanding that feminist and postmodern readings - while often opposed - can sometimes be thought of in terms of one another. It is not mere coincidence that both feminist and postmodern critics share Docherty's vocabulary as he dwells on: the 'mobile or fluid', 'untimeliness', 'transgression of borders or boundaries', 'inner and outer' spaces, 'displace[ment]', seduction' and 'the sublime'. Some of these terms are also used by post-colonial

critics such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Stuart Hall to define the post-

colonial. The introduction to this section noticed the uneasy relation between the

often conflicting demands of gendered and national identities, and the feminist and

post-colonial. Moreover, discussion of Muldoon outlined the tensions between post-

colonial and postmodern theorizations of identity. Reading McGuckian, this chapter

will notice how her poetry can be seen not only as postmodern, but also as feminist

and post-colonial with the effect of noticing points of connection between these three

disparate yet intimate critical dis-positions. This is not to say that theorization

within each of these fields is the same or to argue that these fields equal one another.

Nevertheless, this chapter does intend to notice a conversation that can take place

between these three different readings of McGuckian's poetry.

For example, there are two important directions taken by Docherty's essay that

will be followed up in this chapter: first, he outlines the representation of time in

McGuckian's poetry in terms of Gilles Deleuze and Immanuel Kant to argue that her

'poetry is a call to critical historicism' whereby an antagonistic stance is taken in

relation to History with the effect that time is 'thrown out of joint'. Although

alluding to Luce Irigaray, Docherty does not elaborate on how McGuckian's 'critical

historicism' can also be seen to constitute a 'critical her-storicism' which can be

developed from readings of Kristeva's essay 'Women's Time' (1979). A second

fruitful point in the essay is when he refers to McGuckian's break with 'place-logic',

a term taken from Walter J.Ong's Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue

(1958).[10] Docherty reads this in terms of Deleuzian deterritorialization which he

views as postmodern without focusing on the ways in which displacement in

McGuckian's poetry can be understood in terms of her dispossession and dis-

position as a woman and colonial subject within one of the last remaining British

colonies.

This chapter risks continuing the now ten-year-old fashion of reading

McGuckian's poetry in terms of feminist theorization as it explores McGuckian's

transgression of bodily borders.[11] Where it will differ from the other readings of

McGuckian cited above, will be in the way that it understands her transgression of

space or break with 'place-logic', in terms of territorial borders and a post-colonial

politics. So the chapter will come at McGuckian's poetry from feminist and post-

colonial directions which will be brought together at the end with a final section on

gendered national identity and post-nationalism. My intention is not to draw up

lines of apartheid between postmodern, feminist and post-colonial readings of her

text, but rather to acknowledge the ways in which postmodern theorization of

identity has changed the way feminist and post-colonial identity politics can be

thought, and to argue that this has a bearing on how McGuckian's poetry can be

read.

In McGuckian's poem 'The Soil-Map' (1982), the speaker says: 'I appeal to the

God who fashions edges/ Whether such turning-points exist'.[12] This chapter will

explore what it means to question 'edges', 'turning points' and boundaries in order

to ask what are the effects of writing a delirious or nonsensical poetry from the

periphery, and what does it mean to evade the making of sense? By way of

answering this, the first part of the chapter will consider the representation of bodily

borders in 'The Over Mother' (1994) and 'The Heiress' (1982) in relation to the

psychoanalytic and feminist thought of Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce

Irigaray, asking how far these theoretical frames affect understanding of gendered

identity in Irish poetry. The second part will focus on the representation of space in

the poems 'Smoke' (1982) and 'On Ballycastle Beach' (1988), asking how far the

transgression of territorial spaces redefines understandings of nationality. This will

result in discussion of both gendered and national identities in terms of the

disidenfitication outlined by Butler in the introduction to this section.

Making comparison with theorists from post-colonial contexts, this chapter will

avoid mapping a uniform framework of post-coloniality onto poetry from the North

of Ireland since the term post-colonial is a site of contestation and debate particularly

in relation to an area which is one of the last remaining British colonies. Even so,

interest within Post-colonial Studies regarding the theorization of multiple identities

informs my reading of McGuckian's poetry as it did with Muldoon in the previous

chapter. For instance, does the indeterminate status of identity in Ulster affect the

poetry, does McGuckian's poetry write from the ambivalent position of a nomadic

subject who abandons place-logic and how does this affect the way we think of

feminism?

Woman and Territory

The Flower Master is a collection that contains many poems about border-crossings

and threshold states that are often thought in terms of a young women's growth from

childhood to the adult, as in the poem 'Eavesdropper'.[13] In 'Postmodern

McGuckian', Docherty notices: 'These borders, however, are not the expected

geographical border (though that one is here two) but are more symbolic borders,

such as the boundary between infancy and adulthood'.[14] In her discussion of 'The

Soil-Map' and 'The Heiress', Clair Wills has made useful connections between

bodily and territorial borders in McGuckian's poetry.[15] My project here is to discuss

the borderline disorders of McGuckian's poetry in relation to the representation of

bodily (gendered) and territorial (national) borders.

McGuckian's poem 'The Heiress' from The Flower Master stresses women's

displacement in relation to land.[16] Dispossessed and displaced, what secure

motherland can the female figure in the poem represent?[17] In this poem, as in Irish

legal history, the mother inherits through the son. The Irish nation is feminized but

the female character is disconnected from the farmland and does not engage in

'delicate Adam work' or 'man's work' of tilling the soil. Yet the man's work is

'delicate' which is a word that is more evocative of women's work or a lady's

embroidery suggesting that skilled labour need not necessarily be viewed within

traditional conceptions of masculinity. Even so, the female figure in the poem is still

left uninvolved with the man's work since she is told to 'stay out of the low/ Fields'

and out of the sun.

Agricultural work on the land is connected with the temporal: 'Where the furrow is

this year the ridge/ Will be next'. Time and space are represented as interdependent

with one another as the land reflects the change of seasons and crop rotation. The

temporal and territorial are presented in terms of 'husbandry' and 'Adam Work'.

The reference to Adam connects with a his-story we have all known since the dawn

of Judaeo-Christian civilization since this is the tale of Creation with all its emphasis

on the male as creator. Stanza two maps out a male domain of male work which the

woman 'watches' from afar since she is uninvolved with his territory and implicitly

outside his space. Although she is also a part of 'pure' nature 'a place for fawns',

she is uninvolved in his manipulation of nature except to the extent that she is

connected with the natural and is also manipulated or told what to do by him. By

implication, both woman and nature are colonized or taken over by the male who

penetrates their dark places or low fields. Here, McGuckian holds up for

examination the traditional relationship that is conventionally drawn between nature

and woman, whereby women are conceived of as somehow more natural than men.

In the first stanza, darkness, heart-shaped hands and Italian rooms protected from

the light by shutters are connected with one another:

> You say I should stay out of the low
> Fields; though my hands love the dark,
> I should creep till they are heart-shaped,
> Like Italian rooms no longer hurt by sun.

The woman is located within 'dark', enclosed and interior spaces. Why her hands

are heart-shaped is unclear except that the image gives a further sense of what might

be an allusion to an inner emotional space. The lack of clear meaning in the lines

further enacts the sense of an unenlightened and secretive inner space being written

into the poem. The poem introduces readers to an elusive, allusive and illusive inner

voice that although addressing a 'you' in the poem seems closed off both from the

addressee and the audience of the poem who are allowed to eavesdrop into her inner

thoughts.

The woman's space is introduced in the third stanza and it is presented in terms of interiority and childbirth:

> But I am lighter of a son, through my slashed
> Sleeves the inner sleeves of purple keep remembering
> The moment exactly, remembering the birth
> Of an heiress means the gobbling of land.

The woman's 'slashed/ Sleeves of purple' are evocative of Elizabethan clothing but also her body after birth. She remembers the 'moment' of birth 'exactly' and the word 'moment' introduces her own sense of temporality that is associated with her body. However, the female is presented as having no real control over time and territory since 'the birth/ Of an heiress means the gobbling of land'. The woman will be married for her land and gobbled with it. She is disconnected from the land and its history which are possessed only by the husbandry of the man who tills the land each year. Like Cathleen Ní Houlihan, McGuckian's female figure is the dispossessed woman who is homeless and wandering along the shore and she is exiled from History or time as we know it.

The end of the poem depicts the woman walking along a beach. It is only here that she is able to fully possess both the land and herself as 'unruly' she drops '[a]mong my shrubbery of seaweed my black acorn buttons'. Such a place becomes an outlet for the woman who moves away from the masterful voice that dominates her in the first stanza. Rather than being a figure who is fixed and stationary, the woman is walking at a point of instability. More generally, the beach symbolizes a place where the edge of the land is defined but also where boundaries are gradually eroded by the tide, and where the land mass is in a state of continual change.

The woman in 'The Heiress' is either housed indoors '[l]ike Italian rooms no longer hurt by the sun' or is outside walking by the sea. When she is not at home she becomes homeless and 'unruly' on the beach like a castaway who makes herself at home among the seaweed. Paradoxically, it is when the woman is away from the house, and walking along the periphery of the beach that she is most at home. In the poem there is a tension between being at home and being homeless, and between being rooted and free. The feminist Alice Jardine has argued that

> ... given that ethos means heim, at home, as in Plato's cavern, the point may be not to rush out of the cavern with everyone else, but rather to stay, to render it strange, uncanny - to develop an ethos unheimlich by questioning the writing on the walls of the cave itself.[18]

My argument is that this is the effect of the strange inner voice in 'The Heiress'. McGuckian's heiress may have left the house but down on the beach she develops her 'ethos unheimlich' or something strange and uncanny that challenges traditional conceptions of the woman at home. As with Jardine's comment, McGuckian's poem undermines conventional conceptions of meaning as the writing on the 'walls of the cave', a dark and inner page that is evocative of the female body or the womb which is a place of creation, renders the world strange and uncanny to readers developing an 'ethos unheimlich' where it is difficult to contain what is written within a single interpretative frame.

In the poem there is a merging at several points between the 'domestic' and 'nature'. There are images such as the 'striped marble of the glen' that links with the 'Italian rooms' which are likely to have marble floors; a window is imagined in the mountain; and there are 'acorn buttons' on the beach. Nature is elided with

domesticity with the effect of dissolving divisions between the unhomely and the homely. Hélène Cixous's reading of Freud's uncanny notices how '[i]t is the between that is tainted with strangeness'.[19] Cixous uses the example of the ghost which moves between heimlich and unheimlich realms, thus evoking the uncanny. The ghost treads the periphery between life and death disturbing the limits of both. For Cixous, the unheimlich presents that which in 'solitude, silence, and darkness will (never) be presented to you'.[20] Cixous reads the uncanny in terms of death and locates it at the edge of representation. In 'The Heiress' the uncanny is evoked as typical boundaries between the natural and the unnatural, and meaning and the meaningless, are crossed by the insubstantial and shadowy figure of the heiress who is a ghostly figure located on the edge of things, and whose view renders the world strange to us.

As McGuckian's poetry questions the implicitly male 'God who fashions edges/ Whether such turning-points exist', it charts the unheimlich, to rest on the edge of the subliminal, thereby challenging interpretation or representation within a Symbolic realm. McGuckian's poetic style is comparable with Kristeva's notion of poetry as 'the plural, heterogeneous and contradictory process of signification encompassing the flow of drives, material discontinuity, political struggle and the pulverization of language'.[21] A difficulty with Kristeva's conception of poetic language is that it does not differentiate between different kinds of poetic discourses. If Kristeva sees all poetry thus, how would McGuckian's poetry differ from poetry by anyone else? At the same time, Kristeva's 'Revolution In Poetic Language' (1974) acknowledges how poetry penned by either male or female is haunted by

'discontinuity' which suggests that l'écriture féminine need not be understood

exclusively in terms of the gender of the author but as a style of writing that is

nomadic rather than monadic; allusive rather than seeking fixture. As Paul

Muldoon, who is possibly McGuckian's ideal 'cache-cache' partner, suggests: 'We

all know that if we try to nail a thing down it can pull the nail out and walk away'.[22]

Muldoon's use of metaphor is precisely what allows his silken poetic philosophy to

keep moving and to keep unrooted, and this is the aspect of poetic language that is

celebrated in Kristeva's work.

Bodily Borders

The way in which the ability to interpret and mean within McGuckian's poetry is

called into question needs exploring further in relation to the notion of

disidentification that was raised in my discussion of Judith Butler in the introduction

to this section. Bearing this theoretical framework in mind, I will look at the issues

of liminality, subjectivity and fluid identity in McGuckian's poem 'The Over

Mother' from Captain Lavender (1994).[23] Stanza one begins in a hotel that is

described as being 'sealed' which has connotations of security, containment, secrecy

and the building of barriers:

> In the sealed hotel men are handled
> as if they were furniture, and passion
> exhausts itself at the mouth. Play kisses
> stir the circuits of the underloved body
> to an ever-resurrection, a never-had tenderness
> that dies inside me.

The sealed room could be a safe house in which men are moved around like furniture and the poem itself becomes a kind of safe house as it secretly covers where exactly it is located. As is usual in McGuckian's poetry, the poem could well be covering the context of war in Belfast, and political readings of the poem, whereby the sealed hotel could be a prison or a place of safety, are merely insinuated. A clue to the way in which the political situation is covered in Captain Lavender is alluded to in the epigraph for the collection which is taken from Picasso and compares with the tensions found in Paul Klee in Chapter Two: "*I have not painted the war ... but I have no doubt that the war is in ... these paintings I have done'. –* Picasso, 1944".

'The Over Mother' provides us with a poem that is hermetic or locked away, where the reader engages in a game of hide-and-seek with the meaning of the poem. The images of the poem can be interpreted from different positions which challenge the containment of the poem within any single hermeneutic space of meaning. In the 'sealed' space of the poem in which the war may be contained or which could alternatively be the backdrop for either casual sex or torture in a hotel room, nothing can escape: 'passion/ exhausts itself at the mouth' and 'tenderness' 'dies inside me'. Like the room, the body is secretively sealed within itself and thresholds become built into the poem. The mouth is a threshold between body and world but this place of articulation and communication between subject and world is 'exhausted'; it seems to fail to connect the inside of the body with the outer environment and its 'audience'. If the poem refers to lovers, then they are 'underloved' and there is little 'tenderness' as they remain self-contained. If the poem refers to prisoners, the 'men

are handled' like objects or 'as if they were furniture', whereby they would be

dragged or lifted like dead bodies. It is uncertain whether the 'underloved body'

belongs to the men, the poetic speaker or whether the speaker is a poetic voyeur who

watches people inside the hotel. So in spite of the reference to a body, the poetic

voice manages to remain disembodied and it is difficult to ascertain from where the

poetic voice is coming. The poem challenges identity as characters in the poem

remain uncharacterized and the inability of the mouth to communicate even by

'kisses' is suggested and any emotion this 'stirs', 'dies' 'inside me'.

The poem shifts outside the scene from stanza one and the voice directly addresses

its 'audience'. However, it is implied that this audience is as 'dead' as the

unresponsive and 'underloved' body. The audience is described oddly as being

'vertical' and as they stand upright, they epitomize a living death which is also

described in stanza one when the body is stirred to an 'ever-resurrection' and then

dies. The word 'vertical' has further connotations of lines or boundaries. This

image is held alongside the notion of a delimited or 'sealed' room which evokes the

sense of there being untangible bodily and communicative thresholds written into the

poem, between figures in the poem, and between writer and audience.

What transgresses these thresholds are words themselves which are associated with

water and flight: words 'fly' and are 'leaky'. They are 'shallowised night letters'

which plays on the euphemism for condoms. The night letters come from a dark and

fluid realm which is indefinable and has possible associations with ejaculation,

fertility or plurability. The word 'shallowised' suggests that language is shallow

never hitting the depths or that language exists in the shallows, a watery space that

can be compared with Paulin's 'Almost There' (1994) which was written in the same year; where speech travels through darkness and moisture, and which is evocative of a feminine realm that disturbs his attempts at straight talking. This leaking of language challenges self-containment: refusing to be 'sealed' it leads to the question 'what you has spoken?' Such a question suggests that identity is plural, made-up of a number of 'yous'; identity is fluid and language does not allow for any stable sense of subjectivity.

As words leap out with the potential to 'fly' they challenge subjectivity. The image of birds in stanza three connects with the notion of flight in stanza two, to be followed with the image of syllables stretching out from one speaker in an attempt to touch the other as might the 'kisses'. Yet at the end of the poem, the poetic speaker is not imagined in flight but grounded with her audience looking to her 'as if I could give you wings'. The positioning of the word 'if' in this line suggests that flight, which is imagined in terms of connection and communication, is impossible. We are back to the concerns of 'Aviary' where the woman is trapped with only language and metaphor as vehicles for potential fluttering, 'whenever you release the birds in me'. The sealed containment of stanza one permeates the whole poem suggesting that although language, which is connected with sexuality, provides the opportunity for flight, the bodies in the poem remain sealed, self-contained and suffering. Unlike Heaney's Sweeney who is given wings and exile against his wishes, at the end of the poem, McGuckian's speaker is imagined facing the audience who hope for a flight that is left unfulfilled. In psychoanalytic terms, the boundaries between bodies and the thetic boundary that rests within language can be ambushed but never fully

crossed. The poem bears testimony then, to the limitations of the Symbolic and the

difficulties of communication whether it be linguistic or physical. The poem charts

a tension between being confined and the potential for escape, and also how that

tension maps onto the confinement of language (silence) and the expression of the

self (poetry).

The relationship between the subliminal and the sublime, and the body and space

may be explored further. According to Kristeva, the limit of representation is

understood as the thetic border between a semiotic maternal realm which is

unrepresentable and a Symbolic phallic realm of representation. In this way, her

theories of subliminal or bodily limits can be connected with writing about the

postmodern sublime and the notion of thinking at the limit or alluding to the

unamenable to representation which was discussed in relation to the poets in Section

One. For example, both French feminist and postmodern theory confront the

incomprehensible or the boundary between the rational and irrational; that which is

conceivable and inconceivable. In 'Postmodern McGuckian' Thomas Docherty

chooses to read McGuckian's articulation of borderlands in terms of subliminal

bodily limits and the sublime limits of representation. He argues that her poetry

breaks away from 'place logic' or territorial borders with the effect of demonstrating

that this can be understood in terms of postmodern frameworks. This chapter is

interested in the way McGuckian's deterritorializing move away from 'place-logic'

rests somewhere between a post-colonial urge to transgress the borders of a colonial

territory which was discussed in the first section, and feminism as it takes leave from

traditional understandings of gendered identities. Unlike the male poets,

McGuckian's deterritorialization takes us into a poetry that undoes and transcends the limits of gender and, in this way, her poetry moves a step further towards decolonization and deterritorialization.

McGuckian's deterritorialization is comparable with both Paulin and Muldoon; except that McGuckian's poems such as 'The Heiress' articulate an experience of being in a female body, which is neither found in Paulin's anxiety over the feminine in 'A Taste of Blood' (1994), nor Muldoon's much discussed distaste for the feminine in 'Aisling' (1983).[24] Paulin's 'A Taste of Blood' is worth exploring further, not because it is particularly edifying poem but because in it the speaker struggles with his understanding of the female.[25] He explores a failing relationship:

> At long last he believes
> that he's found a metaphor
> to explain the way it always pans out
> between the pain of them

As Paulin's poem communicates a certain amount of phallic guilt, he connects the woman not only with the sea, but also that which cannot be got to or got at. She is as difficult to open as an oyster and to do so involves a knife or penetration that is imagined as too violent and ultimately unsuccessful since it gets him no closer to her: ' – if she's a clamped oyster/ that may or may not have a liking for him/ then he can only be a claspknife'. The woman is notably connected with the forest that is drawn on by Cixous in her analysis of the feminine, and understood in terms of a fear and darkness that cannot be known. She is also thought of primarily as a vagina which is both desired and resented for its secrecy. So the 'Calvinist' with his Enlightenment mentality is 'fearful' and his attempts to know or penetrate the

woman are desired yet not, since 'who would ever want/ a spirit pranged like a knife'?

A negative view of intercourse, yet what is telling is the way in which Paulin's poem understands the feminine as an unknowable 'quick melt' and the way that the male speaker wishes to be part of this but cannot be so by penetration alone. What is interesting is the way the poet 'losing and chasing answers to his own question' writes with a phallic script connected with his 'hard penis' yet this is 'a hand writing/ with someone else's pen'. Although the male writes a phallic script, it is not his but 'someone else's'. This is a moment of breakthrough in the poem since it suggests that the male writer 'thinking otherwise' or towards the woman becomes dispossessed from his own script. He wishes to 'melt into/ her own quick melt' to attain her space, not by penetration with all its connotations of colonization but by an unimposing dodging between her lips. However, what lies between the couple is a lack of adequate communication and violence: 'blood and fuckyous/ between them'.

Paulin's problematization of male and female relations in 'A Taste of Blood' is bound by the linguistic and, written in the same year as McGuckian's 'The Over Mother', it is comparable in its representation of contained and uncommunicative bodies. Except that McGuckian's poem evades meaning whereas Paulin's tries to chase and assign it; to find answers to his 'own questions' so as to control and rationalize the unanswerable; to make sense out of nonsense. It is precisely his 'belie[f]/ that he's found a metaphor/ to explain' which is the problem in this poem. McGuckian's metaphors move towards the inexplicable, the irrational and the nonsensical. However, in Paulin's 'A Taste of Blood' the speaker hopes to pin down

his angst surrounding the feminine in a language that ripples away from him as much as does the 'undulant lip' of the female whose tongue/ genitals are associated with an anti-foundational fluidity as well as the impenetrability of stone. The poem plays with ways of knowing to suggest that in spite of his 'rationalizing' of their relationship, it is the female partner whose intuition tells her, as she observes him lying disgruntled on the 'lapsed futton' (with its connotations of soft sagginess and impotence), that 'this morning there'll be blood/ - blood and fuckyous/ between them'. Perhaps the only 'answer' for the male speaker here is the Muldoonian phrase 'get over yourself'; 'think otherwise', dump Kinch and Calvin, and become a little more 'aspen'.[26]

At the Frontiers of Place-Logic

McGuckian's allusive poetic territory and refusal to ground the poem within an easily definable interpretative place can be developed in relation to the theorization of space. A foundationless situation where there is no firm territory on which to locate a poetic voice hints at problems of representative space that has implications for feminist and post-colonial theorization of identity politics. Reasserting the importance of space in cultural theory, Edward Soja explains how space is fundamental in any communal life and in any exercise of power. He argues that a 'whole history remains to be written of spaces - which would at the same time be the history of powers'.[27] According to Soja, an unsettled and unsettling geography is part of the postmodern condition.[28] However, as McGuckian's poem 'Smoke'

suggests, unsettled geography is part of Irish experience for people in the North of

Ireland whose geography is debated and where the territory is home to contesting

identities. Soja's conclusion is poignant when he argues that a 'critical human

geography must be attuned to the emancipatory struggles of those who are

peripheralized and oppressed by the specific geography of capitalism' and here we

could add colonialism. For Soja, those who are peripheralized are the 'exploited

workers, tyrannized peoples, dominated women'.[29]

'Smoke' is the opening poem of McGuckian's first collection, The Flower Master,

and it alludes to both territorial and subliminal borders:

> They set the whins on fire along the road.
> I wonder what controls it, can the wind hold
> That snake of orange motion to the hills,
> Away from the houses?
>
> They seem so sure what they can do.
> I am unable even
> To contain myself, I run
> Till the fawn smoke settles on the earth.[30]

The place in the poem is evocative of Belfast at the time of the Orange marches

when bonfires are built in provocative celebration by unionist members of the

community. The speaker worries whether the smoke can be contained and asks if

the wind will 'hold/ That snake of orange motion to the hills/ Away from the

houses?' At a metaphorical level, the poem asks whether violence can be controlled

within a heated and volatile situation. The speaker is portrayed running from

potential violence and through an unnamed territory. Describing her/his fear s/he

says: 'I am unable/ to contain myself', which alludes to the subliminal borders of

the self and the positioning of the poetic 'I' in the poem. There is an implicit analogy between the speaker's self and the fire, with the worry that neither may be contained; the lid may come off and fire or madness may be released. The controlled tone of voice adopted by the speaker gives the effect of listening to a poetic voice that is just about contained within the curt stanza form. The poetic speaker is in transit, ungendered and unlocated in either community. My argument is that this lack of representative space is due less to the effects of a postmodern condition identified by Docherty, and more to a lack of representative space that is symptomatic of a history of colonization in Ireland. At one level, 'Smoke', whose poetic speaker and territory is ungendered and unlocated, illustrates an interest in self-consciously exploring the limits of geographic and personal space. Exploring the mapping of space has political implications for poetry from the North of Ireland: if personal and geographical borders do not hold where does this leave sectarianism in Ulster and the Partition of Ireland?

A border in the poem also exists between the urban houses and the country hills. Rather than being read in terms of politics from the North of Ireland, the poem can be read at another level as a nature poem describing the autumnal experience of bonfires being lit. A further problem is that a reader without knowledge of Ireland would not necessarily pick up on McGuckian's allusions to Orange Day. In this way, McGuckian's poem is secretive rather than obscure as it is written for a specific readership and the poem protectively guards its meaning against uninformed outsiders who are lost by not recognizing the background from which she writes. So a further boundary is created here between those who are let into the political

subtexts of the poem and those who are left outside. With allusions to a specific

context, the poem writes a territory where only certain readers can confidently tread.

On the one hand, the meanings of 'Smoke' are part of a 'chosen ground' rather than

the 'common ground' which is imagined by Seamus Heaney at the end of 'Gifts of

Rain' (1972).[31] In this way, the political implications of the poem become audience

dependent. To notice the political resonances of 'Smoke', an outsider would have to

become familiar with the specificity of McGuckian's community or 'place logic'

which begs the question for whom is McGuckian writing and, in spite of her speaker

on the run, is her secretive poetry always able to deterritorialize or escape from her

place? Although the context of the poem can be localized, there is still no firm

ground on which to locate the poetic speaker or from which to interpret the poem

and it is in this way that the poem constitutes a break with 'place-logic' or the

foundational. If there is no foundational position from which to identify the fleeing

poetic speaker, what kind of maps are McGuckian's poems providing, what are the

political resonances of her poetic cartography and does this constitute a critical

geography?

J.B. Harley's essay 'Maps, Knowledge, and Power' (1988) addresses the issues of

space and power which are touched on by Homi Bhabha. It is useful to explore his

theorization of space and cartography in order to discuss the representation of place

in McGuckian's poem 'On Ballycastle Beach' (1988) which will bring together

discussion regarding the representation of the body and space, and feminist and post-

colonial identity politics. Harley notes how

> Both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation, maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and extends influence upon particular sets of social relations. By accepting such premises it becomes easier to see how appropriate they are to manipulation by the powerful in society.[32]

Like time, maps regularize human existence. Referring to European maps, Harley explains how they supported imperialist beliefs in 'Europe's God-given right to territorial appropriation'.[33] Hence, ideological boundaries exist before the maps are drawn up. Therefore, the image of the map is a useful metaphor for contestation between discursive fields of power since '[l]ike the historian, the map-maker has always played a rhetorical role in defining the configurations of power in society as well as recording their manifestation in the visible landscape'.[34] In the light of this it is interesting to ask how far the poem 'On Ballycastle Beach' can be read as challenging the historian, the map maker and configurations of power in society.

In his essay 'Decolonizing the Map: Post-Colonialism, Post-Structuralism and the Cartographic Connection' (1989), written a year after McGuckian's 'On Ballycastle Beach', Graham Huggan argues how cartographic representation involves presenting a particular view of the world which draws up boundaries that contain identities within specific spaces. Huggan views Homi Bhabha's reading of the ambivalence of colonial discourse which

> ... undermines the claim to coherence of cartographic discourse by revealing that the exemplary structuralist activity involved in the production of the map (the demarcation of boundaries, allocation of points and connection of lines within an enclosed, self sufficient unit) traces back to a "point of presence" whose stability cannot be guaranteed ...[35]

The issue then is 'not whether deconstruction can somehow provide a "better" map but the problematization of "any discourse which proposes itself as an exact map of

reality'".[36] So what kind of map of reality and space for identity does the poem 'On

Ballycastle Beach' (1988) provide?

'On Ballycastle Beach' is comparable with the earlier poem, 'Smoke', in its refusal

of any firm ground on which to locate the poetic speaker. The poem is dedicated to

the speaker's father and opens with images of the sea, the 'flow of life', fluidity of

meaning and identities:

> If I found you wandering round the edge
> Of a French-born sea, when children
> Should be taken in by their parents,
> I would read these words to you,
> Like a ship coming in to harbour,
> As meaningless and full of meaning
> As the homeless flow of life
> From room to homesick room.[37]

The 'wandering' in the poem is accompanied with images of homesickness and

endless travelling through the 'flow of life', whereby it is the 'words' that provide

some kind of 'harbour' for the 'ship' out at sea. There is a sense of indeterminate

place in the poem, and it is worth remembering that although the poem is located in

a named place, there are a number of Ballycastles in Ireland.[38] Whereas Heaney,

Paulin and Muldoon often take on the voice and point of view of a male speaker,

McGuckian's poetry is less determinate and the identity of the poetic speaker is

uncertain, and can be read as a parent speaking to a child or, as a child who, Cordelia

like, comes from France to talk to her aging father. Identifying the poetic speaker

who is unidentifiable becomes merely an attempt at finding an interpretative line

from which to view the poem and which the poem resists.

The poem can be viewed as an inverse writing of Yeats's 'A Prayer For My Daughter' (1921). In an attempt to locate the poem within a tradition, Clair Wills has also made connections between the poem and Yeats's play <u>On Baile's Strand</u> (1904) in which Ballycastle Beach is the most northern beach of Co. Antrim where the seemingly childless Cuchulain kills his son who has sailed to Ireland, thereby ensuring his inheritance will be broken up. Wills notices how, by way of contrast, McGuckian imagines the daughter arriving from a French sea to reclaim her father's inheritance.[39]

In stanza two the figure, who might be either the daughter or the father, is imagined resting: 'In a city that has vanished to regain/ Its language ...' The poem shelters in a space that is uncharted by cartographers and which is comparable with the secretive space of 'The Over Mother' which was written six years later. The message here is that a person or a place must first lose their name in order to regain their language or identity, which is a message that defies the ability to communicate since to forget names is to let go of both language and identity. The figure in the poem occupies insecure and 'invisible' territory, and the poem imagines a representational space which is alternative to our normal maps of spatial existence. The stanza enacts this by presenting us with an indeterminate figure in a poem where there are unclear pronouns, where there is uncertainty who is speaking or observing and who is acting.

The figure whose identity is unclear throws her/his 'watch, the heartbeat/ Of everyone present, out into the snow'. This indicates a loss of time and a loss of landscape since the snow is a blanket which blanks out the distinctive features by

which the landscape might be identified. What then are the effects of this poem in relation to Irish national identity? As traditional conceptions of time and territory are abandoned like the watch thrown out into the snow, the poem lays to rest both colonial and nationalist preoccupations with history and geography. In the poem landscape and history are eroded by the sea which is described as 'the old escape/ Of water's speech' which is 'faithless to the end'. The water allows for a fluidity of meaning but this is 'faithless', unsymbolic and inarticulate. The sea is an ancient place where meaning is produced wave by wave but also a place of the future where old meanings are broken down and transformed. In 'The Heiress' a sense of the unheimlich was introduced with images of the woman walking along the shore. Imagery of the seashore as dispossessed periphery is also introduced in 'On Ballycastle Beach' and it is interesting to investigate the different associations the sea and the beach evoke in literature and theory.

The sea tends to be associated with freedom from social constraints. Alternatively, the sea can be understood in terms of a pre-Oedipal and unconscious realm which is supposed to be unwritten by the social, and is evocative of Freud's oceanic feeling. A feminist might view the sea in terms of Cora Kaplan's Sea Changes (1986) as a maternal, saved and womb-like place.[40] Women and the sea tend to be linked in literature and in French writing by theorists such as Kristeva, who thinks the maternal in terms of semiotic seas which may be due to the linguistic connections between 'mer' and 'mère'. Although in On Baile's Strand (1904), Yeats imagines the sea in terms of the father, James Joyce and Carl Jung viewed the sea as an

archetypal image of the mother and the feminine.[41] In <u>Symbols of Transformation</u>

(1956), Jung notices:

> The phonetic connection between G. *mar*, F. *mère*, and the various words for sea
> (Lat. *Mare*, G. *meer*, F. *mer*) is certainly remarkable, though etymologically
> accidental. May it perhaps point back to the great primordial image of the mother,
> who was once our only world and later became the symbol of the whole world.[42]

The sea can be understood in terms of shifting, indeterminate meanings or waves of

alterity. In post-colonial terms, the sea is a place of escape from violence on land, a

place from which the colonizers come and a place from which a connection with

France can be made. The sea is also associated with the strange or unknown.

McGuckian's sea is involved in an ever changing process of deconstruction which

may allude to a nervous breakdown: 'Even the Atlantic has begun its breakdown'.

Hence, the language of the poem fragments into a series of images of geographical

location or 'north and east', and the temporal or 'late summer'. In the poem it is as

if the world is falling apart. As traditional concepts of history and territory are

abandoned like the watch thrown out into the snow, what might this do to identity,

colonial and post-colonial agendas? By way of answering this question, in 'On

Ballycastle Beach' there is a merging and dissolution of linguistic borders, and a

sense of falling in and out of the Symbolic between the rational and irrational. In the

poem there is the image of the book of 'squares' and 'circles' which indicates the

incompatibility of the linguistic icons chosen by the parent and child since,

according to the proverb: 'You cannot fit a square peg into a round hole'. The

squares and circles are evocative of the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood's novel

<u>Surfacing</u> (1979) which narrates the story of a woman who is looking for her lost

and dead father, and who has a breakdown where her view of the world becomes distorted. There is a coincidental intimacy between McGuckian and Atwood as Atwood imagines the act of surfacing as the uninventing of the world, destroying the sentence back to sense, thus avoiding being taken over by history. Atwood writes: 'Everything from history must be eliminated, the circles and the arrogant square pegs'.[43] My argument is that 'On Ballycastle Beach' also attempts to dive from the wreckage of Irish history into something less scripted and this less written space can be understood in terms of her secretive hermeticism, délire or unreading, and the destruction of the sentence back to sense.

The squares and circles of the book in 'On Ballycastle Beach' do not form words as we know them and so this is a book of hieroglyphs. The poem itself seems to be haunted by personalized poetic codes and traps through which the reader must tread carefully in a poem where vanishing or absence is associated with language as in Tom Paulin's 'glitch/ in what you're saying' in 'Almost There' (1994). The grammar and images of the poem become fragmented and unclear with the effect of articulating an ambivalent, ever-shifting poetic vision which flits from thoughts of the 'summer house' to a 'pre-wedding/ Dress' with the effect of creating a personalized code or private realm where we must read in the gaps and the silences. The Symbolic ability to represent is called into question and the poem lapses into a fluid realm of linguistic breakdown which is associated with the Atlantic. As in 'Smoke', the poetic speaker's gender is unclear as is her/his territory with the implication that identity is a fragile construction which does not always hold since it

is forever in process. 'On Ballycastle Beach' charts a place at the floodgates of representation where meaning, territory and identities are dissolved.

This move towards deterritorialization connects with Thomas Docherty's reading of McGuckian's poetry as problematizing 'place-logic'. Docherty uses Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's reading in On the Line of the 'Rhizome' (1983) which was discussed in Section One and can be developed in relation to the poems.[44] The rhizome is conceived of as an underground network which branches off into infinity, continually on the move, refusing the monolithic, substituting for binary structures multiplicity, pluralism and strategies of inclusion. This is imagined as a model of deterritorialization which can be viewed in terms of the post-colonial as well as the postmodern. The rhizome refuses to put down roots, to ground representation or find a transcendental signifier or telos. In this way, the rhizome would be viewed as routed rather than rooted and Docherty argues that this is the movement of McGuckian's poetry. Considering the homeless women existing on the periphery in her poems 'Smoke', 'The Heiress' and 'On Ballycastle Beach', this view is useful.

The rhizome refuses containment; charting borderlands, it disclaims any stabilized space. Graham Huggan draws on Deleuze and Guattari's description of the map not as delimiter but as something that can always be remapped and understood in terms of the sprawling rhizome from A Thousand Plateaus (1988): 'The map's flexible design is likened by Deleuze and Guattari to a rhizome, whose "deterritorializing lines of flight" effect "an asignifying rupture against the oversignifying break separating structures or cutting across a single structure"'.[45] What is interesting is when Huggan indiciates how the writer Nicole Brossard has adapted Deleuze and

Guattari's notion of the rhizome as a space which is 'open and connectable in all its dimensions' into a feminist cartography.[46] That is, a cartography whereby the revised spaces occupied by feminism, regionalism and ethnicity challenge the claims of cultural centrism as shifting grounds that are themselves subject to transformative patterns of de- and reterritorialization.[47] This work explicitly acknowledges the relativity of modes of spatial (and, by extension, cultural) perception in the pursuit of social and cultural change.[48] In this way, the minority discourses of feminism and post-colonialism are comparable in their fight to remap cultural or ideological spaces in an attempt to bring the periphery to the centre.

Comparably, Stuart Hall argues that space can be redefined by attending to the developmental, unfixed and plural nature of national identities. Thinking identity in diasporic ways though notions of hybridity, Hall imagines post-colonial theory as inhabiting an in-between realm that thinks at the limit with the effect of transgressing and reconfiguring our fields of conception. The epigraph to Huggan's essay is taken from Thomas Shapcott's "Maps" (1987) whereby the map is fixed and needs to be remapped by a journey:

> The problem with maps is they take imagination.
> Our need for contour invests the curve,
> our demand for straight lines will have
> measurement out in bones. Direction
> rips the creel out of our hand. To let go now
> is to become air-borne, a kite, map, journey ...[49]

Abandoning conventional maps, becoming rhizomatic and remapping, imagination becomes less located, airborne and free. A way out of the constricting rooms of 'The Over Mother' (1994) is to do as the woman in 'The Heiress' (1982) does and pace

the less charted space of the beach which constitutes an ever shifting periphery between land and sea.

In relation to the notion of crossing borderlands, nomadic and fluid identity, Clair Wills mentions how post-colonial discussion of the

> Contemporary fluidity of borders, mobility or previously settled peoples ... accords with psychoanalytic investigation into the unconscious to render the dissolution of bonds and communities both natural and inevitable ... Therefore contemporary geopolitics and multinational capitalism causes the decentring of subjectivity.[50]

Notions of fluid borders are connected with 'psychoanalytic investigation of the unconscious' with the effect of a 'dissolution' of boundaries and the 'decentring of subjectivity' or identity. The decentring of subjectivity and dissolution of boundaries suggests that migration becomes a cure for both nationalism and imperialism since their respective boundaries and notions of containment do not hold. Yet how far the notion of migration is relevant to McGuckian, who remains living in the North of Ireland, is debatable. Perhaps it is because she has not left that her poetry tries to take flight from the ground of Ulster into less locatable territories while acknowledging difficulties with finding wings for herself and her audience.

Luce Irigaray has accused male-centred or phallogocentric ideologies of enclosing femininity within a space of dispossession which may be compared with the dispossessed experience of colonial subjects. She addresses the man's delimitation as though he is a cartographer, draftsman or artist:

> Everywhere you shut me in. Always you assign a place to me. Even outside the frame that I form with you ... You mark out boundaries, draw lines, surround, enclose. Excising, cutting out. What is your fear? That you might lose your property. What remains is an empty frame. You cling to it, dead.[51]

McGuckian's challenge to the God who fashions edges, implicitly undermines the boundaries set out by sexism and racism, chauvinism and imperialism, on an island where women and nation, body and space are entities that have been controlled and contained.

For instance, McGuckian's portraits of women looking out to sea are evocative of cartoons of Cathleen Ní Houlihan looking out to sea for aid from abroad.[52] However, the female figure turning her back on the land could signify a refusal to attend any longer to questions of territory. McGuckian's migratory images, evocative of the unheimlich, of 'meaningless' 'wandering' and the dissolution of place, can be viewed as a response which abandons territorial issues altogether. When the Irish territory is mapped onto the female body, the impulse may well be for the Irish woman writer to abandon conventional maps altogether and become a disembodied, deterritorialized voice whose identity is unclear. This is a move towards a premature post-nationalism before the post-colonial has even happened in Ulster.

A French-Born Sea

Such a line of argument needs elaborating in relation to McGuckian's French influences: in 'On Ballycastle Beach' the daughter comes from a 'French-born sea' and there is a sense of the Northern beach in Antrim being connected with France. Geographically, this is odd since the South of Ireland is closer to France than the North. This French connection can be understood in relation to a history of French

aid to Irish nationalists. Yet the connection with France can be read in terms of post-

nationalism and viewing Irish identity in relation to the rest of Europe. Appeals to a

French-born sea and the use of French in her poetry suggest an attempt at wish

fulfilment that imagines England is less geopolitically close than is France, resulting

in a selective geography that chooses to forget Ireland's less hospitable neighbour.

In this way, McGuckian plays with European cartography.

   The Northern Irish critic Edna Longley makes a surprising statement when she

notices how Northern writing is involved in a project of remapping and border

transgression: 'Northern writing does not fit the binary shapes cut out by

Nationalism and Unionism ... It overspills borders and manifests a web of affiliation

that stretches beyond any heartland - to the rest of Ireland, Britain, Europe'.[53]

Longley continues by arguing that

> ... the term "identity" has been coarsened in Ulster politics to signify two
> ideological-package deals immemorially on offer. To admit to more varied, mixed,
> fluid and relational kinds of identity would advance nobody's territorial claim. It
> would undermine cultural ideologies. It would subvert the male-pride that keeps up
> the double frontier-siege.[54]

In view of Kristeva, it is interesting that Longley genders sectarianism, the attention

to boundaries and delimitation as male while 'fluid and relational kinds of identity'

are implicitly connected with the female. Bearing in mind Longley's own

sectarianism and condemnation of nationalist writers involved with Field Day, it is

shortsighted to suggest that women are not also at some level involved with a

frontier mentality. This has a bearing on how we read Kristeva since here, it can be

acknowledged that women can be just as complicit with attempting to contain space,

meanings and people as are men; just as men are equally able to conceive of fluid

and flexible ways of thinking. What Kristeva's work outlines are two different ways

of thinking, a sensible mode of knowing and non-sensical mode of unknowing. The

possibility of adopting a more critical position against History can be undertaken by

both genders while bearing in mind that alternatives to rational and enlightened

thought have been encoded as feminine.

Longley sees the North as a 'frontier region where Ireland and Britain penetrate

one another'. The notion of penetration between nations links uneasily with notions

of the rape of Mother Ireland by an imperial aggressor and Longley overlooks the

unequal distribution of power between different cultures within a sectarian

community. Having said this, Longley's identification of over spilling borders is

important as it redefines the relationship between North and South. Looking to

something less separatist and more integrated, her statement questions the colonial

and nationalist containment of Irish space, moving towards more flexible modes of

identification or passages between identities which are more evocative of Homi

Bhabha's work than Longley's.

In an interview entitled 'The Third Space' (1990), Homi Bhabha explores the

notion of inhabiting a realm between representational spaces. Developing issues of

translation and hybridity, Bhabha argues that '[w]ith the notion of cultural

difference, I try to place myself in that position of liminality, in that productive

space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or

otherness'.[55] Bhabha explains this further by remarking how the 'difference of

cultures cannot be something that can be accommodated within a universalist

framework'.[56] For Bhabha, cultural diversity must be maintained yet must avoid a situation of cultural apartheid. Respect for alterity or otherness provides the possibility of transgressing borders while preserving difference. Residing in an ideal third space in-between contesting identities, Bhabha argues that if identification is a process of identifying with and through an-other, the subject is itself always ambivalent because of the intervention of that otherness.[57] In this way, the third space or in-betweeness takes place in the process of identification which necessarily oscillates between Self and 'other'. This extends and translates identities, refusing their strict containment and resulting in the 'disarticulation of entities'.[58] This was explored in my reading of the dis-positions in Paul Muldoon's poetry. The notion of dis-position and disarticulation are built on by feminism with Butler's idea of disidentification which suggests that identity needs unpicking before the writer can express the unheimlich of home with the effect of constructing a critical her-storicism.

But how useful is the possible respect of otherness and this abstract notion of another (mother) space as a cure for ethnic hatred when 'the other' might threaten you on a daily level? Of course, McGuckian and the theorists provide no easy answers to this question. What is interesting is how McGuckian's poems 'The Heiress', 'The Over Mother', 'Smoke' and 'On Ballycastle Beach' transgress preconceived boundaries between land and sea, body and space, woman and nation with the effect of challenging our conceptions of location, Motherland, centre and periphery. Rather than providing a water-tight narrative which relocates and sanitizes the relationship between woman and nation, McGuckian's poetry runs like

quicksilver beyond the limits of conception in an act of deterritorialization that challenges foundational thought. In the poems I have considered by McGuckian, there is no firm ground from which readers can stake their claim. This refusal of stable ground might be read as postmodern. However, taking into account the cultural specificity of Ireland, it is also helpful to understand McGuckian and Muldoon's refusal of stable ground, as both a symptom of and challenge to a history of colonialism. That is, on an island where land has been a constant issue, and where in the contemporary situation of sectarian violence in the North, territory and borders are constantly policed. McGuckian's aspen poetry protects itself against the domination or colonization of any one particular level of understanding. Her secretive hermeticism plays 'cache-cache' with readers where she writes snaky and delirious lines that run off 'pointlessly' with the effect of challenging how we interpret and choose to assign meaning.

Kristeva's 'Revolution in Poetic Language' imagined poetry transgressing the limits of the law. McGuckian's poetry can be read in terms of the ambush of borderlands where the unruly woman walks along the beach challenging more rooted conceptions of a stable Motherland. Kristeva imagined a 'space-time of infinite expansion' which is located in a semiotic realm.[59] That is, a realm always defined by and a part of rather than apart from the Symbolic realm of representation which is precisely why the feminist poet should be a keen and critical reader of dictionaries. McGuckian's poetry alludes to less-identifiable, less-placeable spaces where the 'being' rather than 'subject' can be determined by her-storicity and not by fixed,

eternal or transcendental claims upon a true identity,[60] and this effect of her poetry

will be compared in my next chapter with Eavan Boland's Outside History (1990).

Without denying the specifity of McGuckian's experience, a connection can be

made between the footloose figures in 'The Heiress', 'The Over Mother', 'Smoke'

and 'On Ballycastle Beach', and Rosi Braidotti's view of identity in Patterns of

Dissonance (1991) and Nomadic Subjects (1994) which discuss the (post)modern

crisis of identity alongside feminist debate. While, in Nomadic Subjects, Braidotti

notices the problem of using Deleuze, whose work on 'poli-sexuality' and

multiplicities tends to leave gender out of the picture, she happily uses and abuses

his work on the 'rhizome' to constitute a feminist nomadic politics that adopts a

critical attitude towards 'any complete and unconditional alliance with any

philosophy'.[61]

Braidotti writes: 'For if Ariadne has fled from the labyrinth of old, the only

guiding thread for all of us now, women and men alike, is a tightrope stretched

across the void'.[62] Ariadne or the female figure has fled from her confinement at

home at Knossos, away from the labyrinth and the obsession with finding a centre

for the subject, and into territory which is less limited. Such territory is associated

with the fearful, secretive, void that haunts Paulin's 'A Taste of Blood', a dark

hiding place into which both genders can fall as they walk a sensible line on a

tightrope with all its associations of precariousness. To fall from the line is to let go

of the rope and confront the dangerous edge of things imagined by Paulin in Chapter

Two. This is a fall from a sacred version of History and foundational understanding

into an anti-foundational, secular and critical consciousness. Unlike the monad who

operates within the vision of one, steady and central point of reference,[63] the nomad

flees the centre and paces the shores of representation: 'Nomadic consciousness is a

form of political resistance to hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity'.[64]

For Braidotti: 'Nomadic politics is a matter of bonding, of coalitions, of

interconnections'.[65] The nomad's journey deterritorializes and decentres stabilized

systems of thought in the hope of imagining in-between darker spaces where newer

forms of political subjectivity can be explored. Like McGuckian, Braidotti goes

differential, critical and her-storical.

As McGuckian's poetry testifies, the creation of alternative nomadic spaces

continues to challenge and develop understandings of the territory and body of

Ireland, leading towards a more heter ogenous model of being rather than a

delimited and rooted notion of subjectivity or 'being subject to'. Her poetic vision,

while critiquing representative spaces, locks itself away from the overtly political in

a secretive act of her-meticism that disallows total possession. In this vein,

McGuckian's poetry is purposefully dispossessed as it deconstructs and remaps our

understanding of national territory with poetry that always eludes us. McGuckian's

retreat into a secretive space where 'place-logic' is disrupted and naming is

problematized, has the effect of both confirming and undermining the implicit grasp

gendered national identity has on the Irish female writer. The next chapter will

compare the movement of Eavan Boland's poetry with that of McGuckian and ask

how she makes differing claims for her-storicity.

'Notes to Chapter Four'

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[1] Cf. Medbh McGuckian, 'The Soil-Map', The Flower Master and Other Poems, (Meath: Gallery, 1982, 1993), p.36. This chapter was first given as a paper entitled 'Bordercrossings and the Transgression of Space' at the IASIL Conference in Goteborg in Sweden, 4-11[th] August, 1997. It is to be published in the forthcoming COSTERUS Series by Rodopi, Amsterdam. I would like to thank my audience for their questions and comments. Additionally, I would like to thank Medbh McGuckian for kindly agreeing to be interviewed during this conference. Cf. Appendices 3.

[2] Thomas Docherty, originally published as 'Postmodern McGuckian' in Neil Corcoran, ed., The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland, (Pennsylvania: Dufour, 1992), pp.189-210, p.191. This essay was renamed and modified in 'Initiations, Tempers, Seduction', Alterities: Criticism, History, Representation, (Oxford: University Press, 1996), pp.127-148.

[3] Cf. Clair Wills, 'The Perfect Mother: Authority in the Poetry of Medbh McGuckian', Text and Context, Autumn 1988, Vol.3, pp.91-111; Mary O'Connor, "'Rising Out': Medbh McGuckian's Destabilizing Poetics". Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies, Winter 1996, Vol.42, No.4, pp.791-811; Eileen Cahill, " 'Because I Never Garden': Medbh McGuckian's Solitary Way', Irish University Review, Autumn-Winter 1994, Vol.24, No.2, pp.264-71; Peggy O'Brien, 'Reading Medbh McGuckian: Admiring What We Cannot Understand', Colby Quarterly, Dec 1992, Vol.29, No.4, pp.239-50; Ann Beer, 'Medbh McGuckian's Poetry: Maternal Thinking and a Politics of Peace', Canadian Journal of Irish Studies, July 1992, Vol.18, No.1, pp.192-203; Kathleen McCracken, 'An Attitude of Compassions', Irish Literary Supplement, Autumn 1990, Vol.9, No.2, pp.20-1; Susan Porter, "The 'Imaginative Space' of Medbh McGuckian", Canadian Journal of Irish Studies, Dec 1989, Vol.15, No.2, pp.93-104.

[4] Hélène Cixous, (1969) L'exil de James Joyce ou l'art du remplacement, thesis for Doctorat d'État, (Publications de la Faculté des lettres et sciences de Paris-Sorbonne: Grasset, second edn, 1985).

[5] Medbh McGuckian, Venus and the Rain, (Oxford: University Press, 1984). These lines are misquoted by Docherty as the phrase 'tree of the woman's' is left out in his revision of 'Postmodern McGuckian' in Alterities, p.127.

[6] Docherty, 'Postmodern McGuckian', p.191.

[7] The Concise Oxford Dictionary, ed., Della Thompson, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995, 9[th] ed.), p. 73, p.1019.

[8] For an example of the ways in which a woman's bad grammar has been ironed out see Anne K.Mellor's documentation of the ways in which Percy Shelley altered Mary Shelley's manuscript of Frankenstein changing her dashes into semicolons and altering her straightforward and colloquial diction into a more ponderous and latinate prose. Cf. Mellor, Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters, (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.58-69 and Appendix; E.B. Murray, "Shelley's Contribution to Mary's Frankenstein", Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin, 29, (1978), pp.62-68 where there is published a useful side-by-side listing of the rough draft and fair copy, and the 1831 revision; Johanna M. Smith, "'Cooped Up": Feminine Domesticity in Frankenstein', Frankenstein Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism, (Boston: Bedford, 1992), p.273.

[9] Among dictionaries consulted for 'cache-enfant' were the Larousse Dictionnaire de la Langue Français lexis, ed., Jean Dubois, (Paris: Larousse, 1989) and The Oxford – Hachette French Dictionary, eds., Marie-Hélène Corréard & Valerie Grundy, (Oxford: University Press, 1994).

[10] Walter J.Ong's Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue (Cambridge, Mass,: Harvard University Press, 1958).

[11] Feminist readings of McGuckian which have been made since 1988 and before, are typified by Clair Wills's 'The Perfect Mother: Authority in the Poetry Of Medbh McGuckian', Text and Context, Autumn 1988, Vol.3, pp.91-111. Eleven years later, feminist criticism of McGuckian is hardly a passing fad and not limited to reading her in the vein of James Joyce's Molly Bloom.

[12] Medbh McGuckian, 'The Soil Map', The Flower Master, p.36.

[13] McGuckian, 'Eavesdropper', Ibid., p.15.

[14] Thomas Docherty, 'Postmodern McGuckian', p.193.

[15] Clair Wills, 'Medbh McGuckian: The Intimate Sphere', Improprieties: Politics and Sexuality in Northern Irish Poetry, (Oxford: University Press, 1993), p.71-4.

[16] McGuckian, The Flower Master, p.57.

[17] Cf. Wills, Improprieties which raises similar questions in her discussion of McGuckian's poem 'The Soil-Map'.

[18] Alice Jardine, 'The Demise of Experience: Fiction as stranger than truth?', Postmodernism: A Reader, ed., Thomas Docherty, (London: Harvester, 1993), p.439.

[19] Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche', New Literary History, Vol. 7, No.3, Spring 1976, p.543.

[20] Ibid., p.548.

[21] Ibid., p.122.

[22] Paul Muldoon, Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation, John Haffenden, (London: Faber, 1981), p.135.

[23] McGuckian, 'The Over Mother', Captain Lavender, (Meath: Gallery, 1994), p.64.

[24] It is necessary to notice the problematic relationship with gendered identity that exists particularly within the work of Tom Paulin which is raised in Wills's Improprieties (1993). In Reading Paul Muldoon (1998) Wills has also noticed a profound anxiety regarding the feminine within Paul Muldoon's work. Additionally, David Cairns and Toni O'Brien Johnson's book Gender in Irish Writing, (1991) contains an essay on '"Bog Queens": The Representation of women in the poetry of John Montague and Seamus Heaney' where these two poets are shown to create equally warped representations of women. Since this has already been discussed by Wills at length and in numerous conference papers, my project here is not to repeat such argument in depth since this would deflect from the emphasis on the dis-positions and dis-identifications that exist within the poetry of McGuckian, and the way in which this resituates feminist and post-colonial theorization of identity politics.

[25] Tom Paulin, 'A Taste of Blood', Walking a Line, (London: Faber, 1994), pp.70-71.

[26] At a metaphoric level the asp might be connected with the phallic. However, in the context of earlier discussion, the asp can be understood in terms of McGuckian's 'aspen tongue' or the woman's speech that was outlined in 'Aviary' which may allude to Eve's discussion with the Serpent.

[27] Edward Soja, Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Cultural Theory, (London: Verso, 1989), p.19, p.21. Cf. Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Blackwell, 6th edition, 1995).

[28] Ibid., p.60.

[29] Ibid., p.74.

[30] Medbh McGuckian, 'Smoke', The Flower Master, (Meath: Gallery, 1982, 1993), p.11.

[31] Seamus Heaney, 'Gifts of Rain', Selected Poems 1965-75, (London: Faber, 1980), p.65.

[32] J.B. Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge, and Power', The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, design and use of past environments, (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), p.278.

[33] Ibid., p.292.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Graham Huggan, 'Decolonizing the Map: Post-colonialism, Post-Structuralism and the Cartographic Connection', Ariel, Vol.20, No.4, October, 1989, p.129.

[36] Ibid., p.113.

[37] Medbh McGuckian, 'On Ballycastle Beach', On Ballycastle Beach, (Meath: Gallery, 1988, 1995), pp.61-2.

[38] Docherty, 'Postmodern McGuckian', p,208.

[39] Wills, Improprieties, pp.184-5.

[40] Cora Kaplan, Sea Changes, (London: Verso, 1986).

[41] William Butler Yeats, On Baile's Strand, John P. Harrington, Modern Irish Drama, (London: Norton, 1991), pp.12-32; James Joyce, Ulysses, (London: Penguin, 1992).

[42] Carl G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia, Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol.5, eds., Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordhamn, Gerard Adler, William McGuire, 2nd Edition, Trans., R.F.C. Hull, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1956, 1970), p.251.

[43] Margaret Atwood, Surfacing, (1979), pp.176-7. Cf. 'Introduction to Place', The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, eds., Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, Gareth Griffiths, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.396.

[44] Docherty, 'Postmodern McGuckian', p.206.

[45] Graham Huggan, p.125.

[46] Cf. poetry of Nicole Brossard, Amantes, translated as Lovhers, (Guernica Editions, Canada: 1987)

[47] Graham Huggan, p.127.

[48] Ibid., p.125.

[49] Ibid., p.115. Cf. Thomas Shapcott, Travel Dice, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1987).

[50] Clair Wills, 'Strangers To Ourselves', rev. Julia Kristeva, Women: A Cultural Review, Vol.13 (3), 1992, p.284.

[51] Luce Irigaray, Elemental Passions., Trans., Joanne Collie and Judith Still, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.24-5.

[52] Cf. 'Expectancy', The Leprachaun, September 1911, p.219.

[53] Edna Longley, 'From Cathleen to Anorexia', The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994), p.194.

[54] Ibid.

[55] 'The Third Space: An Interview with Homi Bhabha', Identity: Community, Culture, Difference, ed., Jonathan Rutherford, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p.209.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., p.211.

[58] Ibid., p.221.

[59] Kristeva, 'Women's Time', p.192.

[60] This sentence is a slight reworking of a comment by Docherty in 'Postmodern McGuckian', p.204.

[61] Rosi Braidotti, 'Nomadic Philosopher: A Conversation with Rosi Braidotti, Utrecht, The Netherlands, August 1995 with Kathleen O'Grady, Women's Education des Femmes, Spring 1996 Vol.12 No.1, pp.35-9. Republished on the internet at http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/Braidotti/index.html, p.4.

[62] Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy, Trans. Elizabeth Guild, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.15.

[63] Ibid., p.111.

[64] Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.28.

[65] Ibid., p.35.

CHAPTER FIVE

BUT I NEED TIME - :
EAVAN BOLAND, MONUMENTS AND MISREPRESENTATION

A river is not a woman ...
Any more than
A woman is a river,

Eavan Boland, 'Anna Liffey', In A Time of Violence (1995) [1]

The last chapter developed discussion of Paul Muldoon's dispositions into an

exploration via Judith Butler of disidentification in the poetry of Medbh

McGuckian. This chapter develops the issue of disidentification by examining it

in terms of dissolving identities and misrepresentation in the poetry of Eavan

Boland. The chapter reads representations of gendered identity against the

construction of a national History in Boland's poetry. It argues that in Boland's

poems, identity cannot be understood without also being aware of how

femininity is positioned by the national within Irish culture. The chapter asks

how far Boland manages to create herstory in the face of History and

problematizes such a project. Using the work of the Southern Irish feminist

critics Gerardine Meaney and Ailbhe Smyth, the chapter notices a tension

between monumental constructions of female identity whereby 'Woman' is

objectified, the representation of 'living' women and fluid identities. This

involves unravelling Boland's critique of History alongside Julia Kristeva's

'Women's Time' (1979), Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of

History' (1970) and Homi Bhabha's 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the

margins of the modern nation' (1994).[2] The main priority is to examine the

relationship between monumental and sacred versions of History, and fluid and

secular versions of herstory. In his essay on 'DissemiNation', Bhabha notices how

> The language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past. Historians transfixed on the event and origins of the nation never ask, and political theorists possessed of the 'modern' totalities of the nation – 'homogeneity, literacy and anonymity are the key traits' – never pose, the essential question of the representation of the nation as a temporal process.[3]

This chapter endeavours to pose such a question whilst exploring the intersections between gender, nation and time within Boland's poems.

First, the chapter discusses how Boland's poetry seeks to destroy the continuities of cultural nationalism so as to ask how far she challenges the representation of 'Woman' and 'Nation' so as 'to brush history against the grain'.[4] Second, the chapter problematizes the optimism involved with seeking a more 'authentic' herstory or narrative for 'The Irish Woman', and notices how this risks eradicating difference in favour of delimited tropes of gendered national identity. Third, the chapter discusses the 'authentic and inauthentic' in relation to decolonization. The fourth part explores 'irreducible identities' and the supplementary nature of identities. The fifth part considers 'dissonance, silence and the in-between' in relation to the irreducible. The sixth part examines 'dissolution' and the final section develops this into an analysis of 'misrepresentation and loss' so as to answer where Boland's poetry takes theorization of identity and the temporal.

In her critical essays, Boland adopts a fairly straightforward argument: women have been edited out of History and objectified in art, therefore they need to be reinserted into the temporal by voicing herstory. This can be understood in terms of the Marxist project of attending to the voices of the marginalized which is described by Benjamin in Part Twelve of his theses when he writes: 'Not man or

men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge'.[5] However, discussing Boland's poetry, the chapter argues that this project is far from straightforward and is beset by contradictions. Within Boland's work there is an equation made between the Real, 'real' time and Women's Time which is problematic The discussion notices how 'authentic' female experience is constantly represented in terms of silence, loss and muteness within the poetry. If herstory is associated with the silences of an uninscribed 'real' time, then 'authentic' female experience is consigned to a mute unattainability that is forever lost. Unpicking this impasse, the chapter examines Boland's work from The Lost Land (1998) where she turns to 'The Necessity for Irony' as a site of resistance and subversion.

By way of introduction, two early poems, 'The Making of an Irish Goddess' and 'The Achill Woman' from Outside History (1990) are discussed, in order to explore how 'Woman' and 'Nation' have been represented. The rest of the chapter focuses on 'Story', 'The Art of Grief' and 'Anna Liffey' from In a Time of Violence (1995), so as to investigate how far Boland reinscribes female temporalities in her poetry and to ask how this changes her relation to the national. As the chapter considers the dialogue that takes place between these poems, it also draws on Boland's collection The Lost Land. Discussing the problematic of decolonization in relation to the forging of post-colonial and feminist temporalities, it asks how identities may be dis-solved if not re-solved. In relation to this, the chapter critiques Smyth's recent essay 'Declining identities (lit. and fig.)'[6] which it argues oscillates, like Boland, between escaping from stone monoliths and recarving them.

National Monuments

Ailbhe Smyth's essay 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi' describes how the figure of

Anna Livia Plurabelle from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake (1939) has been

transmuted into a statue in the centre of Dublin City. In Joyce, she is a water

nymph representing a 'living stream', the River Liffey or in Irish, 'An Life'. In

Dublin, she is carved in 'stone' as a national monument. Smyth criticizes this

static representation of the Irish woman's body as limiting, de-eroticized and

impenetrable, and she draws on Marina Warner's Monuments and Maidens

(1985):

> Meanings of all kinds flow
> through the figures of women
> and they often do not
> include who she herself
> is [7]

In Finnegan's Wake, Anna Livia Plurabelle could be understood as representing

fluidity of meaning, plurality and sexual transgression. However, her statue in

Dublin has become in Yeats's words from 'Easter 1916': 'Enchanted to a stone'.

Anna Liffey the river woman has been monumentalized: she is stylized as a

conventional, allegorical figure functioning to erase the untidy realities of fleshy

women. In this way, the female water nymph and spirit of place, 'An Life', is

grounded or anchored: 'Minute by minute' may 'change' but she lives as a

timeless female figure, a 'stone' 'in the midst of all'.[8]

Educated in England, visiting the States, growing-up within an English literary

tradition where students in Ireland read the Silver Poets, taught by nuns in an

environment where asexual and celibate women preach the values of

motherhood, regarding images of Mary as the ideal to which Irish Catholic

women may or may not wish to aspire, there is a sense that Boland has been subjected to "object lessons". In her essay 'Outside History' (1990), Boland writes of the position of the woman poet in an Irish literary tradition: 'women have moved from being the subjects and objects of Irish poems to being the authors of them. It is a momentous transit. It is also a disruptive one. It raises the question of identity, issues of poetic and ethical direction'.[9] Boland's comment is interesting in that she imagines women not only as writing 'subjects' but also as providing 'momentous transit', 'disruption' and 'direction'. Her diction draws on a vocabulary of movement rather than stasis. Objectivity is understood in terms of the static, whereas the 'real' woman moves and is associated with the living stream rather than with the monumental. In her poem 'Unheroic' from The Lost Land Boland presents us with 'granite patriots' or the monoliths of Irish nationalism as it thrives on the past as an unchanging museum culture that draws upon a national History with which to counteract the claims of colonialism.[10] However, in her essay 'Outside History', Boland imagines female subjects in terms of 'ethical direction' or passages into the future. Boland suggests that the power of a traditional version of nationalism is to stop these passages into the future, to turn women into a trope as Smyth argues is the case with the statue of Anna Liffey: 'The nation as woman; the woman as national muse'. In this way, Irish women are presented in poetry and art as 'passive, decorative, raised to emblematic status'.[11]

The Southern Irish feminist, Gerardine Meaney argues that Boland deals with images of the nation rather than the legislation of the nation-state. In her essay entitled 'Myth, History and the Politics of Subjectivity: Eavan Boland and Irish Women's Writing' (1993), Meaney contends that in Boland's poetry: "The poets

who silence and reduce Irish women to "'static, passive, ornamental figures' are not accused of reproducing or re-enforcing the ideology of the state".[12] Meaney argues that making connections between patriarchy, nationalism and state power, whereby the nation seeks to assimilate citizens into its own idea of itself, risks undermining difference. She suggests Boland's poetry has been assimilated into the patriarchal and the national: "Boland's difficulty in simply walking away from the 'the idea of the nation' ... confirms Julia Kristeva's view that the first phase of feminism, 'while immediately universalist, is also deeply rooted in the socio-political life of nations'".[13] Meaney accuses Boland's poetry of making 'a series of assumptions about the relationship between gender and national identity, particularly in colonized and post-colonial culture, which does not take account of the diversity of Irish women's writing and of women's writing cross-culturally'.[14] This chapter will explore how far this assessment of Boland's is both fitting and mis-fitting, in order to problematize the relationship between gender, nation and time even further, with reference to feminist and post-colonial theorization.

Herstory

With reference to Boland's poems, I will ask whether, as she criticizes the myths of History, she reinstates the power of History as myth rather than subverting it. Judith Butler has persuasively criticized Kristeva's 'Women's Time' (1979) and noticed the difficulties inherent in establishing a herstory. In her essay 'The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva' (1991), Butler notices how Kristeva's

theorization of women's time and a semiotic dimension of language or women's space

> ... appears to depend upon the stability and reproduction of precisely the paternal law that she sought to displace. Although she effectively exposes the limits of Lacan's efforts to universalize the paternal law in language, she nevertheless concedes that the semiotic is invariably subordinate to the symbolic, that it assumes its specificity within the terms of a hierarchy which is immune to challenge. If the semiotic promotes the possibility of subversion, displacement, or disruption of the paternal law, what meanings can those have if the symbolic always reasserts hegemony?[15]

Butler also notices how the female body that Kristeva seeks to express is itself a construct produced by the law that it is supposed to undermine. Hence, I will ask how far Boland's inscription of the female body in her poems offers any real agency.

Butler criticizes notions of a saved female space of transcendence when she notices how

> The female body that is fed from the shackles of paternal law may well prove to be yet another incarnation of that law, posing as subversive but operating in the service of that law's self-amplification and proliferation. In order to avoid the emancipation of the oppressor in the name of the oppressed, it is necessary to take into account the full complexity and subtlety of the law and to cure ourselves of the illusion of a true body beyond the law.[16]

Discussion of the poems will also notice the problems with authenticity that arise within Boland's work when she attempts to take the representation of women out of historicist myth and into herstory. I will notice how the question of authenticity constantly rears its head when Boland tries to redefine the feminine in relation to the national.

For Kristeva, women's time is imagined as a 'space-time of infinite expansion',[17] where monumental and linear versions of History are subjected to the possibility of difference. In this way, it is History as a continuum that is outside 'now time' which attempts to create a homogenous narrative of tradition

and progress. Comparably, Boland's notion of 'outside History' draws on the possibility of a heterogeneous herstorical materialism where herstory is not mythologized in terms of 'History' or the singular. 'Outside History' is therefore the place where history or herstory really happens. In this way 'Outside History' does not anticipate a utopian flight beyond the 'real' but rather the possibility of the 'real'. Boland's poetry does not reiterate Kristeva's theory point by point, but it is noticeable how her sense of 'now time' is also represented as being 'outside History' as myth, and represented in terms of excess and a neglected female body that is marked by the passages of time.

The fusion of the feminine and the national is explored in Boland's poem from Outside History entitled 'The Making of an Irish Goddess' (pp.150-2). In this poem the mythological mother figure of Ceres is positioned outside secular time:

> Ceres went to hell
> with no sense of time.
>
> When she looked back
> all that she could see was ...
>
> a seasonless, unscarred earth.

The speaker in the poem claims: 'But I need time - '. The space of Ceres is a mythological and sacred time; a story rather than a reality. However, the body of the poetic speaker is scarred by 'real' time with 'the marks of childbirth'; 'real' time is associated with the woman's body which connects Boland's poetry with Kristeva's theorization. Whether we agree with Kristeva's theory of women's time or not, there are points of comparison between Boland's figure of Ceres and Kristeva's theory of how women are positioned as subjects in monumental time, and in relation to History as a linear narrative.

For instance, when Ceres looks at the 'silver in the rock', she conceives of the rock in terms of the body noticing its 'arteries of silver'. The poem also introduces the 'body' and 'flesh' of a 'real' mother who is neither a Virgin mother nor a Roman goddess but who is constantly edited out of History. With 'the marks of childbirth/ still on it', the body in Boland's poem makes gestures and gains scars, with the effect that it is ever changing rather than timeless and fixed. Rather than using the poem as a vehicle for timelessness, Boland's writing allows the female body to age and move toward death, 'remaking the lyric subject into an approximation of a time-bound, disappearing body and thus revising the idea of art in the process'. Boland makes 'the written word a realm not of agelessness and beauty but of change and decay'.[18]

In The Myth of the Eternal Return, or, Cosmos and History (1949), Mircea Eliade identifies a sacred and eternal time of the cosmos, and a secular and changeable 'concrete' time. Rather like Kristeva, Eliade describes 'archaic societies' who 'revolt against concrete, historical time, their nostalgia for a periodical return to a mythological time of the beginning of things, to the "Great Time"'.[19] Kristeva's sense of women's time and Eliade's sacred time are bound up with notions of the 'cosmos' and the 'eternal'. However, when Boland attempts to get out of myth into History, her project becomes comparable with Eliade's notion of modern man's will to get to the historical. In Benjamin's terms this would be a more 'materialist' version of the historical or herstorical. Boland looks not for a utopian transcendence 'outside history' or an 'authentic, positive eternity, which extends beyond time'.[20] Rather, Boland's essays hope to make History more differential and more materialist. That is, to take History out

of myth into a herstorical consciousness which takes place, as in Kristeva, via the female body, yet unlike Kristeva, by critiquing the cosmic, eternal and sacred.

Hence, 'The Making of an Irish Goddess' implies that historical myth ignores 'real' bodies such as the corpses of female victims of the famine in favour of the immortalized Dark Rosaleen and Erin, the Aisling poems or as Smyth outlines: 'Woman Ireland Banba Foladh Eiriú Red Rose Róisín Dubh. Caitlín Ní Houlihán'.[21] The poem suggests that attention to 'the way I pin my hair' is a more 'accurate inscription' of the woman. This is also an inscription of pain or 'agony' that is associated not only with childbirth but with memories of the famine. Writing of the female victims of the Irish famine, Boland is in danger of eliding the differences between patriarchal victimization with colonial exploitation. Yet in doing this, Boland also brings the female body into a herstorical event in the hope that her description of the famine will not be an abstract historicist narrative. She presents herstory in terms of a material time and space peopled with the flesh of rotting corpses, and the cannibalism of 'children devoured by their mothers'.

The poem still makes connections between the woman and the landscape since her scars are imagined as 'an accurate inscription' 'of that agony', of 'failed harvests' or the famine. There is a sense of being unable to escape from the historical link forged between woman and national landscape, and being unable to erase the scars left by historicist myths which are nationalist as well as imperialist: 'There is no other way:// myth is the wound we leave/ in the time we have - '. These lines provide a moment of interruption: rather than describing the historical event of famine as a narrative from beginning to end, the poetic voice interrupts this story with the effect of breaking the narrative. Amongst the

fragments of the poem are inserted the individual experiences of mother and daughter. Myth is presented as wounding with its abstract versions of unscathed femininity. In resistance to eternal myth, the poem invokes the individuality of the mother's scars, her daughter and a particular moment in time that is subject to change such as a 'March evening' where the 'lights have changed all day'. At 'the foothills of the Dublin mountains' time does not stand still, with the effect that neither time, space nor the women are represented as static and unchanging.

Disruptions in the syntax, usually in the form of a hyphen, offer the sense of a silent space being alluded to in the language of the poem. In Criticism in the Wilderness (1980), Geoffrey Hartman explores literary style and identifies moments when the poet swallows his/her own tongue: '(the swallowed tongue) resembles language generally'.[22] This is described at a feminist level by Cora Kaplan in her essay 'Language and Gender' (1986) which notices how femininity has been connected with silence; using the example of Emily Dickinson, Kaplan argues that patriarchal representation of women as mute affects the female poet's handling of written language.[23] The Dickinsonesque dashes in Boland's text also suggest that silence or the unlinguistic is being alluded to within the poem. The hyphens signal an absent meaning, the over-spilling of language and identity, rather than the containment of mother, daughter and nation within the representation of past narratives. However, the fear remains that 'in the time we have', myth will always be there to wound us.

In view of this, it is not surprising that something ironic happens when Boland attempts to inscribe a woman's sense of 'now time' in the form of the present moment into her writing: as soon as her present is written in the poem it becomes a past moment, a memory and an attempt to make that 'present' live in

art. As Boland tries to work against monumental and immortal versions of identity and time, she becomes trapped within the logic of representation. Boland's idea of a 'now time' that can be scripted into the poem as more representative of female experience is in danger of becoming as untemporal as any other representation. Once the moment of a woman's experience is inscribed within the aesthetic space of the poem it risks becoming a frozen trope rather than living and breathing. Boland's poem attempts to record change and in so doing she freezes the moment. For Boland, the present moment which she attempts to inscribe becomes a disappearing middle in relation to the past and the future. Whereas her voice has a beginning and an end which can die away into silence, her pen makes words more immortal and monumental. In this way, the aesthetic or scripted space risks delimiting experience and, in Boland's case, containing 'female experience'. It is as if the Symbolic space can never get to Kristeva's notion of a semiotic 'women's time' with which to subvert the Symbolic and the monoliths of a patriarchal History.

In his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1970), Benjamin suggests that a 'historical materialist' must arrest 'the continuum of history' so as to create a differential 'historical consciousness'. In order to do this the 'historical materialist' must to 'be man enough to blast open the continuum of history'. Benjamin's imagery here is annoyingly macho. Even so, his argument is interesting as it seems that the 'historical materialist' has not only to get to a present moment but also to stop it:

> He [or she] takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history – blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time cancelled; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history. The nourishing fruit of the historically understood contains time as a precious but tasteless seed.[24]

To taste 'now time', the agent has to break out of 'the homogenous course of history', blasting a specific life or, in Boland's case a woman's experience, out of the historical continuum. Like Benjamin, Boland hopes to break through the continuum of History with a present moment that is arrested, held or fixed into her poems like a tableau. It is as if 'now time' has to be held in a vacuum apart from the wheels of History. However, by its very nature, representation cannot get to a 'now time' since as it re-presents, the moment cannot be held out to us as 'now'. So it is difficult to imagine how Benjamin imagines he will 'arrest' the historicist continuum and how Boland can represent a more authentic 'now time' or version of herstory within a representative space which tends to miss the present and therefore becomes a misrepresentative space. How far then is Boland's exploration of female identity, female time, and the relationship between 'Woman' and 'Nation' bound up within the same old structures of oppression?

The Authentic and Inauthentic

'The Achill Woman' begins Outside History: A Sequence, and it constitutes an attempt to break free from idealized and delimited representations of Irish female identity. Boland depicts an Irish woman who at first appears not to be idealized into symbols of Goddess or Motherland. Instead, she is represented as a living woman 'carrying water' rather than a sceptre, wearing 'a tea towel around her waist' and a 'wool cardigan' rather than a hooded cloak. Neither is the Irish landscape around her mythologized as an Emerald Isle of romantic mists and towers as is often found in the Revivalist writing of W.B. Yeats. The apparent

simplicity of the woman suggests that she has been 'demythologized'. Even so, there is something timeless and 'Irish' about this woman who is associated with an 'Easter moon'. Of course, Easter has particular resonances within Irish nationalist history and femininity has often been symbolized by the moon. Moreover, the setting is rural rather than urban and there is a sense of the Achill woman being as 'uncontemporary' as the mythological poor old woman, Shan Van Vocht. In spite of Boland's intentions in her essays where she hopes to explode the stereotypes of women and nation, 'The Achill Woman' is an artistic representation, with potential to become yet another symbol and trope of gendered nationality or Irish womanhood. Challenging 'universal history', Boland risks putting another delimited construct in its place as more authentic.

In her essay 'Feminism, Nationalism, and the Heritage of the Enlightenment' (1995), Carol Coulter notices how '[p]aradoxically, the nationalism which accompanied the elevation of the individual in the Enlightenment also denied the individual'.[25.] Coulter could here be accused of essentializing notions of the Enlightenment yet her comment can be compared with worries over creating universalizing frameworks from which to view identity. Connections can be made between feminism and nationalism which both use fixed notions of identity such as gender and ethnos. Gender and ethnos are markers of both repression by chauvinism and imperialism, and modes of resistance for feminist and nationalist movements. Both first generation feminism and nationalism tend to rely on consensual frames of reference for 'Woman' and the 'Nation'. In the Irish context, women and nationality are connected further as in the iconography of Mother Ireland. As Meaney notes: '[f]ar from being a release, this metaphoric construction of the relation between womanhood and nation tends to keep each in

place as a homogenous and self-contained entity'.[26] In spite of her hopes to move beyond historicist myth into the herstorical, Boland still writes within the confines of gendered national identity with its demand for the authentic. The problematic of decolonization remains and this is a problem that derives from the need for an authentic sense of identity or ethnicity upon which the nation-state is founded. The kind of narrative that says 'We Irish are this' or 'We women are this' relies on a pathos for authenticity that is as confining as it is liberating. If Boland wishes to 'change time' or create her individualized sense of a woman's time, she has also to 'change the world' of the nation and move away from a nationalist conception of History that is rooted in the past.[27] That is, she has to move from a traditional form of nationalism that tends to re-root to a nationalism that re-routes or looks forward. If tradition mixed with progress is the story of nationalism, then a more critical kind of nationalism can refigure modernity on its own terms: looking back and forward simultaneously so as to challenge the historical continuum, the universality of History and, by implication, the modernist essentialism upon which the nation-state is founded and by which 'the people' become fixed.

Timothy Foley explains how '[a]rticulating difference by bestowing a fixed identity on that subaltern exposes the continuity between the tactics of imperialism and the tactics of essentialist nationalism'.[28] This is a further problem with 'The Achill Woman'. In the poem, the speaker acknowledges the irony of reading the 'Silver Poets' with their 'harmonies of servitude' whilst at the holiday cottage where the Achill woman serves her by bringing water each day. As Meaney notes, there are class differences between the two women and it is clear that the speaker has been educated within imperialist traditions. How far

then can Boland fill the silences of history with the words of the marginalized

without bestowing a fixed identity on the Achill woman? What is nagging

discussion of writing for the dispossessed is the danger that in critiquing

historicism or a given idea of History as homogenous, the marginal becomes the

new authentic way of fixing the temporal rather than creating a critical

herstorical consciousness.

As Colin Graham indicates in his essay 'Subalternity and Gender: problems of

post-colonial Irishness' (1996): 'Ethically-endowing the position of the

subaltern can lead to a revelling in the insurgency of nationalism or feminism

which easily slides into a continuous and necessary reinstatement of their

oppressed position'.[29] Hence, male and female critics, Protestant and Catholic,

from the North and South recognize the problematic nature of attempting to

deconstruct gendered national identity. Graham develops the view of Gayatri

Spivak from 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988)[30] arguing that '[e]mphasizing the

mechanics of the ordering of subaltern/ dominant relations rather than searching

for an authentic site of pure insurgency is the starting-point of reading the

gendered subaltern'.[31] How far Irish women or the Achill woman can be

considered as a 'gendered subaltern' is a further question that begins to

deconstruct searches for authenticity and to emphasize the ordering of dominant

relations in Boland's poem. This argument notices how the need to insert

herstory into History as 'pure' and 'authentic' is comparable with nationalist

moves towards decolonization which replace one universal discourse with

another rather than disabling the inherent essentialism on which these narratives

depend. That is, replacing one theological approach to History with another,

making one version more sacred than another or imagining that History can be

redeemed from its previous errors in a progressive way.

What is at the root of the problematic of decolonization for gendered and

national identities is the problem of sacred modes of representation and

understanding. Benjamin confronts this when he tries to blast through the

'historical continuum' only to 'enlist the services of theology' or the monotheism

of his appeal to the Messianic time of Judaism. He ends the 'Theses': 'For

every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might

enter'.[32] This metaphor imagines some 'real' version of History to be resurrected

so as to redeem the world. Likewise, Giorgio Agamben concludes his essay on a

'Critique of the Instant and the Continuum' in 'Time and History' (1993), by

turning to 'Adam's seven hours in Paradise' as 'the primary core of all authentic

historical experience'.[33] Although these thinkers critique certain versions of

History, they cannot resist imagining a more authentic version of events which is

based on a sacred 'real' time beyond them. In order to get to a more critical

herstorical consciousness, hankerings after the authentic either in terms of

religion, the national or a saved female space, need to be questioned. Otherwise,

the writer risks founding another universalizing construction of time or identity

which eradicates difference only to posit a new faith or another myth. This is the

main problem faced by Boland in her poetry so that her aims in her essays where

she hopes to write women into the historical become troubling.

Clair Wills suggests that Boland is caught up within the tropes of womanhood

and nationhood that she seeks to deconstruct:

> Boland, in effect, is a suffragette. She seeks not to challenge the basis of the
> poet's authority, but to widen the political constituency, adding women to the
> electoral rolls. But of course poetry cannot simply add the 'private' or

> 'personal' experience of women to its dominant structures, and Boland herself does not so much represent female experience as trope it.[34]

Meaney takes this comment further suggesting that Boland's poetry is part of first generation feminism which 'aspired to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history'.[35] However, in the same essay, Meaney also argues that

> [h]er construction of the category of womanhood, in her critical writing and to some degree her poetry, owes much to particular ideas elaborated by masculine logic, most notably that the category of womanhood occupies a space outside representation and socialization, and a common capacity for biological motherhood implies a common identity.[36]

Yet this is hardly true of either woman in 'The Achill Woman'. Reception of Boland's poetry is caught in a critical impasse: on the one hand, she is accused of being a 'literary suffragette' who attempts to write women into History; on the other hand, she is accused of constructing a category of womanhood outside History where, according to 'masculine logic', the feminine has been placed 'outside representation'.

Here, 'masculine logic' is essentialized rather than dismembered. Interestingly, Meaney's account of Boland drawing on the 'common capacity for biological motherhood' among women is precisely what Butler has criticized about Kristeva's work. So where is Boland's poetry to be located? Should Boland's poetry be categorized as exhibiting nasty traces of 'masculine logic', shreds of French feminism or something else altogether? If Boland's poetry is to be cleared of these impasses, must it abandon womanhood, nation and History altogether, and how far is it possible or desirable to try to attain defeminized and denationalized spaces?

Meaney explains Kristeva's notion of a third generation of feminism which "is a mixture of the demand for 'insertion into history and the radical refusal of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time on an experiment carried

out in the name of irreducible difference'".[37] This is an important reading for feminist criticism that needs to be stressed, and I will argue that a dilemma between insertion into the historical and the subjective limitations imposed by historicism, haunts Boland's poetry and the critical reception of her poetry. Meaney notices how in Ireland feminism comes into conflict with traditional forms of national identity; she argues: "Any gathering point of solidarity not marked by difference will inevitably return women to 'the noise of myth'". In Benjamin's terms, any assemblage of temporal fragments risks becoming another 'continuum of History' that needs to be arrested and exploded. It is interesting that myth is associated with noise and therefore, by implication, truth or the 'real' would be connected with silence. Meaney concludes via Kristeva that it can only be on the basis of our differences that 'the spaces on the page ... widen to include us'.[38] A more differential mode for understanding feminist and post-colonial identities is thought in terms of absence, the gaps between identities, the spaces on the page or silence. In view of this, I will explore how Boland can play a decentralizing role in her work, so as to ask whether the spaces on the page widen to include whoever 'us' may be. I will investigate this in terms of irreducible identities, the in-between, dissonance and silence.

Irreducible Identities

The poem 'Story' from In a Time of Violence tells of two lovers who run away from a vengeful king, and is evocative of the legend of Diarmuid and Grania. In addition, 'Story' is similar to the Ulster myth of The Fate of the Sons of Usnach where Deidre elopes with Naoise. The king could either be King Cormac at Tara

or King Conchubhar of Ulster. The absence of names in the poem allows it to be

read in terms of both legends, demonstrating how myths interact and perpetuate

one another. As Lorna Reynolds indicates, Deidre's lover, Naoise, is torn

between the two worlds of service to his female partner and loyalty to the king.

The two worlds come into collision and the world of masculine solidarity wins.

As Conchubhar warns: 'the great want that we have, to wit, that the three lights

of Valour of the Gael, the three sons of Usnach, Naoise, Ainle and Aidan should

be separated from us on account of any woman in the world'.[39] Reynolds notices

how here we have the masculine society of the boys objecting to the disruption of

any woman in the world. In this way, the myth of Deidre and Naoise

demonstrates the powers of patriarchy whereby Deidre's advice is ignored and as

a result, the sons of Usnach and Deidre go to their graves. It is noticeable that a

myth about a woman whose voice is ignored should haunt Boland's poem.

Whereas Ceres was positioned in no time, the legendary couple in 'Story' are

unlocated, in no space or 'nowhere which is anywhere'. The myth depends on

them to be abstract figures who are young and beautiful: they do not have scars,

neither do they have any sense of individuality. They are like Adam and Eve in

the garden of Eden who live in a utopian space and eternal time, and beyond

secular notions of time and space. According to the story, the couple can only be

safe and unhunted if they pretend that the archetypal young, slender and red-

haired Irish woman has grown old. Images of an 'ocean-coloured peace' and the

mystical wood enhance the sense of a stereotypical pastoral and mysterious Irish

landscape.

However, 'the light changes' as does the landscape which becomes less

generalized and takes on more specific details of a localized time and place. The

poem shifts into spring in the garden of a Dublin suburb. The experience of the poetic speaker is inserted into the poem and she is depicted writing at a table. The place is not mystical and the female figure is not a young idealized woman, although there is a degree of idealization in the portrait of the writer pictured at her desk.[40] The story of this woman is hard to tell and rather like the Achill woman, it is not told in the poem. All we are left with is an image of a woman writer located in a certain place experiencing an interior moment. Yet this move to write a present moment is eclipsed by gazing into the past story of a myth and the future where she imagines: 'how new it is – this story. How hard it will be to tell'. Like Walter Benjamin's description of the Angel of History which was taken from Paul Klee's painting 'Angelus Novus', the speaker is catapulted into the future whilst looking backwards into the past and with little sense of the present.[41]

Boland's relationship to an interior moment produces an unsettling and supplementary relation to identity and time. As she tries to articulate herstory, the syntax enacts a pensive stuttering in the final lines where the woman's assertions in the present tense – 'I am writing' and 'I am thinking' – are punctuated or enclosed by full stops. These lines read in a stilted way as a series of repetitive false starts that cannot develop beyond short assertions. As she tries to write 'a woman out of legend', this woman's story is as hard to tell as her sense of herself or identity is to articulate; her space in the present is transitory and difficult to write; she will never be wholly present to herself. In this respect, Boland's response to the temporal does not take it for granted that self and time can be controlled into an easy or exemplary narrative. Boland's poem hits at the borders of misrepresentation that is inherent in representation; this is why her

story is hard to tell and her identity is impossible to fully write. This difficulty is reflected in the form of 'Story' which is held tight within two line stanzas and many of the lines are made up of half sentences. When read paying attention to the punctuation and stanza breaks, Boland's poem sounds stilted and caged. Towards the end, the sentences become shorter as though silence is getting the better of the speaker and so the poem ends with the phrase: 'How hard it will be to tell'. The woman's story is located in the future tense as something that has not yet happened and can be thought only in terms of silence. 'Real' time or 'woman's time' cannot adequately be told within the Symbolic, and once again, the 'Real' is problematically equated with 'Woman'.

In her essay 'The Woman, The Place, The Poet' (1991) Boland notices the evasion of a space for oneself in history: 'there is the place that happened and the place that happened to you ... we live not in one or the other but at the point of intersection'.[42] Boland imagines getting to 'a sort of interior moment' which is a liminal moment between universal and individual spaces; public and private realms. In doing this, Boland spatializes time as 'the place that happened'. Like Kristeva, she imagines a time-space that attempts to move between the narratives of mythological, official or national versions of History. By implication, this in-between realm would constitute a supplementary at the margins of official histories and places, moving towards 'real' time and 'real' space. Boland argues in a way that is reminiscent of Benjamin when he imagines the temporal as a tasting of the violent and random event: 'a sense of place can happen at the very borders of myth and history. In myth there are the healing repetitions, the technology of propitiation. In history there is the consciousness of a violent and random event. In the zone between them something happens'.[43] What is odd

about this statement is the way in which Boland's prose attempts to chart an in-between space that is by implication unchartable. Once again, this connects her loosely with Kristeva's notion of 'women's time' as she looks to the thetic border between the Symbolic and semiotic. Boland seeks to move towards another space and time, that is between myth and the historical, but she cannot quite get to it.

Linked with moves towards indeterminacy and a peripheral sense of place/time at the borders of circumscribed reality is the notion that female identities are, in Smyth's terms, 'irreducible'. Meaney draws on French feminist thought, such as that of Luce Irigaray, to demand 'recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex and, as such, exploded, plural, fluid, in a certain way non-identical, this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities'.[44] Perhaps Irigaray relies too much on reducing male identities in the name of female irreducibility. But what is interesting is how Kristeva, Irigaray, Meaney and Smyth, imagine there remains something supplementary about female identity and 'women's time' that cannot be troped. How far does Boland's representation of women outside History develop into recognition of irreducible identities?

By way of answering this question it is poignant that Boland's story is presented as hard to tell. In 'Fever' from The Journey (1987) it is 'as if what we lost is a contagion/ that breaks out in what cannot be/ shaken out from the words or beaten out/ from meaning'.[45] The excess that cannot be troped is a female story and it 'breaks out' like Benjamin's 'blast' in the continuum of history. The impasse continues: how essentializing are hopes for the blast of an authentic female story, is it a truly differential story, and does it always take place within

the confines of the historical continuum or the Symbolic? On the one hand, attempts to locate a female story at the beyond of representation is in danger of imprisoning women in a mute realm. On the other hand, representing 'Woman's Experience' is also in danger of delimiting female experience, reducing difference and silencing other voices with the noise of myth. Boland looks to a space between the beyond of a sacred time and insertion into the historical. This need for a differential space and this move towards the in-between is often understood in her poems in terms of dissonance, and this can be understood in relation to silence. How then, can dissonance and silence be read in Boland's poems, and how does it develop my discussion of the irreducible?

Dissonance, Silence and the In-Between

In the poem 'The Art of Grief' three women are depicted: a statue of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, the speaker's crying mother and the speaker herself. Each woman has the potential to become a trope of some sort since all three are given symbolic roles within the artifact of the poem. One woman exists as an iconic signification, another is an element of narrative, the third is the poetic speaker or subject of the poem. What we see in Boland's poem is an idea of a woman who is an image thought about in terms of an image – the iconized woman is a semblance, phantasma or ghost of women rather than the 'real' thing. Once more, the poem holds within it the recurring tension in Boland's poetry between the secular time of the contemporary woman and a sacred time as represented by the statue. However, the question remains, what would it mean to get to the 'real' and how is this alluded to within the poem?

The aesthetic representation of the sorrowful woman is polished and monumentalized 'set and finished in/ a mutton fat creaminess, a seamless flutter in/ marble'. Although her 'sorrow' has 'entered marble', the weeping statue is 'seamless', she makes no noise or 'no dissonance of grief'. However, sorrow is presented as inharmonious and the mother is presented weeping in a different way:

> I could see that weeping itself has no cadence.
> It is unrhythmical, unpredictable and
> the intake of breath one sob needs to
> become another sob, so one tear can succeed
> another, is unmusical: whoever the muse is
> or was of weeping, she has put the sound of it
> beyond the reach of metric-makers, music-makers. (pp.208-210)

The message here is clear enough: grief is being represented yet the essence of it is beyond artistic representation. In the poem, grief is beyond the visible and also thought of as beyond sound. What the woman experiences is 'beyond the reach' of those who chart noise or the 'metric-makers' and 'music makers'. However, the poetic speaker attempts to say the unsayable within the poetic representation; she attempts to represent the unrepresentability and the silences of sorrow. The way in which this is conveyed is through 'dissonance', the 'unrhythmical' and 'unpredictable'. The polished stanzas of the poem break-up for a moment with caesura and shorter lines that are comparable with the moment in 'Story' where the woman attempts to write herself into the poem. The poetic form disintegrates and the language begins to break down into silence.

Paradoxically, the poetic speaker attempts to smash beyond artistic emblems within the aesthetic confines of the poem to write a non-form within the form of poetry. She tries to blast representation of the woman with the differential,

'unrhythmical', 'unpredictable' and 'unmusical', but in a fairly smooth and coherent poetic language. The way in which the poem remains more lyrical than discordant is an example of how, for Boland, the work of art is something that remains 'polished' rather than smashed. The poem then is a composition that tries to fight composition. The weeping woman is imagined as discomposed and the poem alludes to the limits of composure and composition. Undermining composure and composition, Boland could come close to throwing away the very tools that build the poem, as the poet, in Kristeva's terms from 'Revolution in Poetic Language', makes small ambushes at the limits of language.[46]

It is worth quoting Butler's commentary on Kristeva when, in 'The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva' (1991), she describes 'poesis':

> ... the poetic-maternal practices of displacing the paternal law always remain tenuously tethered to the law. Hence, a full-scale refusal of the symbolic is impossible, and a discourse of 'emancipation', for Kristeva, is out of the question. At best, tactical subversions and displacements of the law challenge its self-grounding presumption. But, once again, Kristeva does not seriously challenge the structuralist assumption that the prohibitive paternally sanctioned culture cannot come from another version of culture, but only from within the repressed interior of culture itself, from the heterogeneity of drives that constitutes culture's concealed foundation.[47]

This discomposure of poetic-maternal practices within the composed or how poetic language can express the semiotic within the Symbolic is played out within Boland's 'The Art of Grief'. However, as is usual in Boland, apart from the underlying threat of discomposure, her poetic voice remains composed albeit on edge. Her critique of 'paternal sanctioned culture cannot come from another version of culture, but only from within the repressed interior of culture itself'.

The poem attempts to go to the edge as the speaker invokes an 'in-between' space and a between time or 'the hour between planets', and at this point the verse becomes less lucid and more comparable with the style of McGuckian:

> From now on let daylight be black-
> and-white and menial in-between and
> let the distances be made of silk. My
> distances were made of grit and the light
> rain throws away in the hour between planets.
> And rush-hour traffic.

Daylight becomes both 'black-/and-white', there is a blurring of boundaries, and the lines over-spill and seep into one another with the effect of troubling the meaning of the verse as it imagines a 'menial in-between' in comparison with a larger cosmic light.

As Meaney notices:

> Hélène Cixous, whom Boland cites in *A Kind of Scar*, has argued that 'inbetween' is the space of women's writing, and Boland's poems move towards it. The inbetween is left open allowing differences between women to remain and to redefine their relationship, allowing the gaps and silences, the inter-dict, to ... question the terms of the poet's authority.[48]

In the final paragraphs of her essay 'Myth, History, and the Politics of Subjectivity', Meaney briefly develops Hélène Cixous's notion of the in-between as she draws on the post-colonial theorization of Homi Bhabha, whose non-dialectical middle was discussed in my chapter on Muldoon. Meaney notices how women's writing challenges configurations of power from the margins: 'from the only margin of difference available which is powerful enough to challenge them'. As Meaney suggests, this is 'the discourse of internal exile' operating according to Bhabha's terms

> in the antagonistic inbetween ... It contests genealogies of 'origin' that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority. Minority discourse acknowledges the status of national culture – and the people – as a contentious, performative space of the perplexity of the living ...[49]

Bhabha's discussion of the in-between is useful for readings of gendered national identity in the Irish context, as he puts in place more 'ambivalent' and contradictory readings of feminist and post-colonial identity politics. He also

draws on Kristeva's 'Women's Time' (1979) in order to argue for the excess of

the people over the construct of the nation or imagined community and, in so

doing, Bhabha notices how for Kristeva, the borders of the nation are 'constantly

faced with a double temporality: the process of identity constituted by historical

sedimentation (the pedagogical); and the loss of identity in the signifying process

of cultural identification (the performative)'. Bhabha argues that rather than

seeking redemption, what post-colonial and feminist temporalities offer is the

challenge to "rethink the sign of history from <u>within</u> those languages, political or

literary, which designate the people 'as one'".[50] This demands a reading of the

'double temporality' or attending to what is in-between the 'pedagogical' and the

'performative'. Identity is thought of as in process or as 'performative'; as

critically differential rather than pluralist. This reading of identity as

'performative' or unfixed goes beyond a liberal politics of multicultural

pluralism, and it is a <u>most</u> important statement for post-colonial and feminist

criticism, since it abandons the theological pathos for authenticity that has

informed first generation nationalist and feminist projects.

Bhabha's theorization is also evocative of the tensions played out in Boland's

poems as she negotiates between national and feminist demands, whilst noticing

how the supplementary nature of gendered and national identities cannot be

contained. Bhabha comments that

> In place of the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation 'in-itself' and
> extrinsic other nations, the performative introduces a temporality of the 'in-
> between'. The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-
> generating time of national production and disrupts the signification of the
> people as homogeneous.[51]

He insists that this liminal space is resistant to the terrors of essentialism:

> The space of cultural signification that I have attempted to open up through the intervention of the performative, would meet this important precondition. The liminal figure of the nation-space would ensure that no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves. This is because of the discursive ambivalence that emerges in the contest of narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative.[52]

Boland writes from 'menial in-betweens', not from one in-between but several and, whether Boland is aware of it or not, this corresponds closely with Bhabha's argument: "From the place of the 'meanwhile', where cultural homogeneity and democratic anonymity articulate the national community, there emerges a more instantaneous and subaltern voice of the people, minority discourses that speak betwixt and between times and places".[53] However, this begs the question posed by Gayatri Spivak in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), where she asks who is included in the 'subaltern voice of the people', when do we hear 'them', and does not the fixed label 'subaltern' itself homogenize difference and the performance of identities in process?[54]

As Medbh McGuckian's poems 'The Heiress' (1982) and 'On Ballycastle Beach' (1988) have shown, 'exile on the edge' need not be necessarily negative. Heaney's exiled Mad Sweeney, Paulin's existential preoccupation with edges in 'Walking a Line' and Muldoon's borderland figures also suggest that the poetic periphery where a freer space may be imagined as an impetus for change is as important for male Northern Irish poets as it is for female Southern Irish poets. In her lecture 'Borderline Cross Talk' (1998), part of which was delivered in her opening speech to the first 'Women-on-Ireland' conference, Smyth imagines the non-dialectical middle in terms of a thetic borderline, as an unarticulated in-between that relates to her conception of a 'tabula rasa' or the uninscribed clean space of the future.[55] As Cixous, Bhabha and Smyth turn to the in-between for political inspiration, this silent, differential and dissonant gap defies definition

and remains an untheorized space of some future potential. Recognizing the ideological terrors of the script, they each turn to this less scripted space. But of what use is this differential beyond of theory that, by its nature, refuses to be pinned down? In-between, marginal and differential spaces that have yet to be spoken can be met only with suspicion: free space is defined by unfree space. Who is authorized to fill in the gaps and silences, and of what use is the mute or unscripted to feminism when, in the first place, woman have been silenced by patriarchy?[56]

Boland draws attention to the silences of representation in her poem 'Listen. This is the Noise of Myth' from The Journey (1987): 'Listen. This is the noise of myth. It makes/ the same sound as shadow. Can you hear it?'[57] Here, myth is imagined as a shadowy presence that silently paralyses expression; as a presence that creates absence. Boland's poetry suggests the vacuum or silence that myth leaves offers the potential for imaginative recreation or a new noise. Likewise, Smyth quotes from the poet Roísín Cowman who writes of

(Changing reality as much through
our imaginings as through our
material acts) Both and.
Not easy. Nervous. Edgy.[58]

Reality here is conceived of as changeable, malleable, flexible; to change reality one must get to an in-between or 'Both and'.

The notion of 'Both and' is also evocative of a 'double temporality'. This in-between, double-time provides an edgy space of internal exile and is imagined vaguely as a female place by Smyth; it is 'the vacant space where nothing is identically the same. Where everything is virtually possible. There nothing is no more and everything becomes'.[59] Smyth's critical writing uses theorists such as Irigaray to move towards the dissolution of consensual frameworks of identity

and alludes to the liberating potential this may provide. However, it is important to notice what Smyth's slippery prose does not dissolve. For example, while re-adjusting certain identities, Smyth retains a stability through the very concepts of identity, identification and categorization; identities may become fluid but Smyth cannot cope with the complete dissolution of 'Irish' identity. This is apparent when she talks of the eclecticism of 'Irish' identity since the 1960s: "I choose not to call that flexible eclecticism 'postmodern' because, while I don't know exactly what that word means (does anyone?), it appears to be used (inter much alia) to connote meaninglessness, even in respect of 'Irishness'".[60] For Smyth, it is desirable that 'Irishness' still retain a meaning of some sort; to imagine that female and national identities can be represented rather than misrepresented.

Prepared to use deconstruction to attack certain kinds of identity Smyth does not altogether do away with the concept of identity: 'Flexible eclecticism' and 'plurability' can be used to stretch versions of identity but not to completely shatter the mirror of identification. However, in spite of Smyth's protestations against 'postmodern' versions of identity, she claims in terms that could be evocative of Muldoon's poem 'Identities' (1973): 'In the end, I couldn't get a fix on identity. But identity is not an end. Only a becoming'.[61] Identity cannot be anchored or fixed; it is read here in terms of a process and becoming or as 'performative'. I would suggest that at this point in the essay, Smyth's theorization of identity is closer to the 'postmodern' theorization of Bhabha since she imagines ungrounded, unfixed identities operating in process, as nomadic rather than monadic, and this has potential to shatter the 'noise of myth'. Smyth's description of dissolution can be developed with reference to Boland's use of the figure of Anna Liffey.

Dissolution

Tensions between fixed and fluid female identities in Smyth's essay and

Boland's 'The Art of Grief' can be understood in terms of Joyce's creation of

'Anna Livia Plurabelle' and Boland's poem 'Anna Liffey'. In Joyce, Anna

Livia is blessed with svelteness or slenderness: 'She was just a young thin pale

soft shy slim slip of a thing then, sauntering, by silvamoonlake'. The woman as

river cannot be grounded and she seeps over the Irish landscape. Joyce's story is

an example of a male writer who attempts to compose (or discompose) a counter-

'masculine' mode of writing:

> It was ages behind that when nullahs were nowhere, in country Wickenlow,
> garden of Erin, before she ever dreamt she'd lave Kilbride and go foaming
> under Horsepass bridge with the great southerwestern windstorming her traces
> and the midland's gainswater awarch for her track, to wend her ways byandby,
> robecca or worse, to spin and to grind, to swab and thrash, for all her golden
> lifey in the barleyfields and pennylots of Humphrey's fodofhurdlestown and lie
> with a land-leaper, wellingtonoseher. Alesse, the lagos of girly days![62]

It is interesting that Joyce uses the Indian word 'nullahs' meaning 'watercourse'.

Appropriately, the 'nullahs were nowhere' which offers the image of unchartable

waters. This has the effect of blurring idioms suggesting that both language and

place are infiltrated by words from other cultural spaces that contest notions of

the purity and the authenticity of the Irish landscape.

Smyth's essay on the statue of Anna Livia argues that as a symbol of

plurability she is a mocking contradiction of the circumscribed realities of

women's lives.[63] Smyth indicates the containment of female identity within

nationality:

> Pluralising identity does not automatically reduce the risk of eternalising and
> essentialising, does not necessarily lessen the acuteness of our anxiety about it,
> but it does mean that it is no longer assumed to be the source for all ... the plural
> allows for variations on the theme. But they are only variations: the theme

remains the same ... In Ireland, identity is still construed as being about <u>national</u> <u>identity</u> ... nationality <u>is</u> identity <u>is</u> nationality.[64]

Like Bhabha, Smyth notices how pluralising identity still keeps identity fixed.

To take the argument one step further would be to notice, like Butler, that

identities are performative or in process. Moreover, agency is found less in

'plurality' and more in noticing the critical dissonance between identities as with

the antagonistic relationship between feminism and nationalism. Criticizing the

limitations of national identity, Luke Gibbons's essay 'Identity Without a Centre'

(1992) quotes Joyce: 'the state is concentric; man is eccentric'.[65] Both male and

female writers recognize the restricting ideologies set-up by the Irish Free State.

Joyce's comment could be rewritten as 'the state is concentric; woman is

eccentric'. How far is Boland's 'Anna Liffey' concentric or eccentric?

What characterizes <u>Life</u> or 'Anna Liffey' in Boland's poem is her

expansiveness: 'She loved the flat-lands and the ditches/ And the unreachable

horizon'. Unlike the statue of the floozie in the jacuzzi, her sense of space is not

containable. Even so, the river takes on her name and woman becomes

associated with place so that another mythological story of a woman in relation

to the national is created. There is a tension in the poem between positioning the

woman in relation to the national and critiquing the national. In the poem the

river is a '[m]aker of/ Places' that will '[n]arrate such fragments for me'. It is

praised for its gifts of plurality as a 'shiftless and glittering' re-teller of the city.

The fluidity of the river is set against the notion of:

> One body. One spirit.
> One place. One name.
> The city where I was born
> The river that runs through it.
> The nation which eludes me.
>
> Fractions of a life

It has taken me a lifetime
To claim.

Here, the sense of place evoked exceeds the place of the nation-state that in its quest for the singular, undermines difference and fractures the poetic self. 'Real' place and identity are elusive and as ungraspable as Anna Liffey. The poetic speaker reclaims her fragmented identity by appealing to the healing powers of the river to make her whole again.

Although the poem appears to look for a whole and more authentic notion of place and identity, the poetic speaker vocalizes a shattered sense of identity and absence: 'I did not know the name for my own life'. Whereas Anna Liffey names places, this woman is dispossessed of her place and her selfhood. There is an imperative to: 'Make a nation what you will/ Make of the past/ What you can - '. In these lines, space and time or 'nation' and 'past' are invoked as there to be rewritten or reconfigured; the national territory and History can be rethought. What is clear is that neither the national space nor the historical past can be made whole. Here we get at last to a shrugging off of the authentic as a mode of wholeness as the poetic voice oscillates between appealing to the spirit of place, and acknowledging the dissolution and excesses of identity or, '[u]surping a name and a theme'.

Place-names such as 'Callary' and 'Islandbridge' are evoked yet the river branches out, taking its nomadic course into nothingness where place is dissolved:

The seabirds come in from the coast.
The city wisdom is they bring rain.
I watch them from my doorway.
I see them as arguments of origin –
Leaving a harsh force on the horizon
Only to find it
Slanting and falling elsewhere.

> Which water –
> The one they leave or the one they pronounce –
> Remembers the other?

On the threshold of space or in the doorway, the woman watches migrating birds

flying towards a horizon that is not fixed but 'slanting and falling elsewhere'.

The birds are 'arguments of origin' as they fly towards an ever-shifting horizon.

Arguing with origin means questioning the past, while flying towards an ever-

shifting horizon means thinking of space as deterritorializing rather than as fixed.

Even so, the woman still attempts to insert her 'sign' and 'mark' into the poem

with Yeatsian elegiac and ceremonial panache: 'I take this sign/ And make this

mark'. Boland is torn between the discomposition of signs or markers, and

holding onto signs and markers in order to get her bearings or a fix on identity.

At this point, the poem seems caught between deterritorialization and

reterritorialization; exploding History and providing a continuum, flying into the

future and holding onto the past. However, an important effect of the poem is

that as soon as her 'mark' is made, the woman's sense of self dissolves.

Although the woman's body becomes a source for future generations suggesting

a female tradition of some sorts is being constructed, the speaker argues that the

'body of an ageing woman/ Is a memory/ And to find a language for it/ Is as hard

as weeping'.

Here, the poem 'Art of Grief' is anticipated and the image of the

unrepresentableness of 'weeping' or grief is compared with the way in which the

memory of the ageing female body is overlooked in representation or

misrepresented:[66]

> An ageing woman
> Finds no shelter in language
> She finds instead

> Single words she once loved
> Such as 'summer' and yellow'
> And 'sexual' and 'ready'
> Have suddenly become dwellings
> For someone else –

Threatened by dispossession from words or silence, the form of the poem 'Anna Liffey' becomes less and less tight as it progresses and there is a move from composed lyrical expression to the more disjointed syntax that is found at the end of 'Story' and the 'unrhythmical' parts of 'The Art of Grief'.

The ending develops onto a further level whereby the image of the migrating sea-birds 'as arguments of origin' prepare the way for the nomadic nature of the final stanza. At the end of <u>Station Island</u> (1984) Heaney resurrected the figure of Joyce who implored the poet-pilgrim to 'Keep at a tangent', like the slanting horizon in Boland's poem, and to 'swim out' on his own.[67] The final part of Boland's poem strips off and enters the waters, swimming out to horizons beyond:

> In the end
> It will not matter
> That I was a woman. I am sure of it.
> The body is a source. Nothing more.
> There is a time for it. There is certainty
> About the way it seeks its own dissolution.
> Consider rivers.
> They are always en route to
> Their own nothingness. From the first moment
> They are going home.

By an odd twist, nothingness or the dissolution of identities becomes home. Boland imagines the body as origin or source that is 'from the first moment' 'en route' to a 'home' which is 'nothingness', and so the female spirit dives off the wreckage of language and History into a semiotic sea: 'There are these phrases/ Of the ocean/ To console us'. The Irish landscape is left behind as the poet enters the water and it is at this point that the poem ends and the poetic voice is

terminated: 'In the end/ Everything that burdened and distinguished me/ Will be lost in this:/ I was a voice'. The poem 'concludes' with a vision of death and reads as an epitaph: 'I was a voice'. Irish identity and gendered identity are left behind as cultural baggage or burdens that distinguished the poetic speaker, and the poetic speaker looks to transcendence or a tabula rasa; a tablet with the words scraped off, where she no longer 'is'.[68] If representation is always a misrepresentation, no authenticity for the poetic self can be claimed, and so the voice turns to death or silence. It is perhaps fitting that the final line of the 'Anna Liffey' sequence is 'Let me die'.[69] The woman who experiences death-in-life finds life only in death. In Boland's poem, 'An Life' is finally killed off or laid to rest but the one thing that remains is her voice. At the end of the poem, the statement: 'I was a voice' may be read as an assertion of the power to live on through language rather than as total death.

In her essay 'Death in the poetry of Eavan Boland and Audre Lorde' (1997), Margaret Mills Harper not only notes connections that can certainly be made between Boland and American poets, she also discusses how 'these poets sounded a note of death as the inevitable accompaniment to the act of speaking...'[70] Harper argues that 'Boland writes herself as small and mortal, subject to absence and death' which takes the opposite view to seeing Boland's poem as writing herself large and immortal in poetry. Harper suggests that for Boland, the "act of self-revelation" occurs in 'the context of self-erasure': 'she has adopted as an element of form a silence surrounding the words on the page or in the air of speech'.[71] Representation of the self is always made in the context of misrepresentation or erasure. Boland echoes Smyth's 'Floozie in the Jacuzzi'

as she imagines Irishness and femininity in terms of erasure, and so in the title

poem of The Lost Land, she ends with the line: *'Ireland. Absence. Daughter'*.[72]

Misrepresentation and Loss

In her essay Harper draws attention to the relation between death and time within

Boland's poetry and, in so doing, she comes to the heart of the problem with how

to understand Boland's relation to identity and writing. First, she argues that

Boland's poetry reacts against linguistic tropes that reduce women to objects

which is like killing them, whereby History or the normative and maculinist way

of thinking causes death. Hence: 'The extent one speaks as a woman subject,

resisting death, is therefore life'. However, Harper runs *into* difficulties when

she reasons that 'the old elimination of women by objectifying then in a trope of

eternal life becomes not a killing but a giving of eternal life'. Harper concludes

that if a woman's experience is delimited into a space of objectivity where she

risks becoming 'eternal', then what she needs after all is death or to be killed off

in art in order to be born into the temporal since she has no life within 'an

aesthetic dead end' and the 'trope[s] of artistic power'.

What Harper hits upon is the way in which, for femininity, art is a place of

either death or the eternal and the two amount to more or less the same thing.

Trying to create a more critical herstorical consciousness in 'The Achill

Woman', Boland attempts to step out of one death where the woman is the

idealized female object within a male tradition yet ends up in another death

whereby the female poet who misrepresents life risks creating more tropes of

female identity. Speaking for marginal voices or the subaltern carries with it the

difficulty of how to make this a malleable and performative articulation, rather than just another pedagogical formation of identity and temporality. In order to be herstorical the female voice within the work of art has to cease as itself and recognize the way in which it is constantly misrepresented. Hence, Boland's poem ends: 'I was a voice' with the effect of taking a distance in order to kill off the misrepresentation of herself.

When Meaney says that Boland works within a male tradition what she recognizes is how such a tradition is bound to the time of the nation-state which is founded on pedagogy and death-in-life, since the need to compose identity in relation to History or a national narrative, results in an erasure of the self or misrepresentation. In addition, it is problematic when Boland seeks to de-objectify the positioning of the feminine within the Symbolic space since her poetry implicitly acknowledges that the aesthetic space of the poem is a place of 'object lessons' where time and identity are constantly misrepresented. In this way, Boland's title 'Outside History' becomes a wry parody of the inability of the female artist (or any artist) to get beyond representation to the 'real'.

As she moves into non-presence, displacement and discomposure, the speaker at the end of 'Anna Liffey' provides a critical and deracinated dispositioning in relation to the limitations of aesthetic space and time. Boland's representation of identity is less grounded or limited as the identity of 'Anna Liffey' is imagined 'enroute' to its 'own nothingness'. The poem 'Anna Liffey' provides us with a pattern that can be applied to the poems discussed in this chapter: first, Boland critiques the monumental and static representation of Irish woman immortalized and objectified in art; second, she reimagines an alternative and more authentic female experience which risks another death as she provides yet another

representation or misrepresentation of femininity; third, with only

misrepresentation available, she takes the female figure into yet another death or

'nothingness' that is imagined in terms of silence or a beyond of writing. In

doing this, Boland's poems, unlike her essays, notice how identity and notions of

the authentic function by misrepresentation, so that 'Woman' and 'Nation' are

never fully present to themselves but part of the noise of myth, which is why she

eventually turns to the dissolution of gender, nation and her 'voice'. If 'Anna

Liffey' were the last poem written by Boland, her posthumous ending, ('I was a

voice'), would be far more effective.

However, Boland has written more poems which repeat similar themes as in

'Witness' from The Lost Land when the speaker asks:

> What is a colony
> if not the brutal truth
> that when we speak
> the graves open.
> And the dead walk?[73]

The 'brutal truth' of 'a colony' is that in speaking (and in writing in English),

violence is remembered or reawakened; representation is thus a 'witness' to

death and self erasure. Although The Lost Land is dedicated to Mary Robinson

as the woman 'who found it', this assertion rings hollow in a collection where

there is no indication of the lost land being found. Instead, what we get are yet

more images of loss in the vein of 'Anna Liffey' of: 'My Country in Darkness',

'a city of shadows', 'the men and women' 'dispossessed'. In 'The Harbour' as in

'Anna Liffey', Boland sets herself up as the national 'citizen' who is 'ready to

record' the 'contradictions' of this place. However, as 'Daughters of a Colony'

suggests, there is '[n]o testament or craft of mine can hide our presence/ on the

distaff of history' or on the Irish female side, in a place that 'never quite was: their home'.

In 'The Scar' Boland turns to Anna Livia once more to notice how the 'Irish rain' softens the features of her 'granite face' which hints at the dissolution of monumentality that comes at the end when she asks:

> If a colony is a wound what will heal it?
> After such injuries
> what difference do we feel?
>
> No answer in the air,
> on the water, in the distance
> And yet
>
> Emblem of this old,
> torn and traded city,
> altered by its river, its weather,
> I turn to you as if there were –
>
> one flawed head towards another.[74]

The end of the poem finds 'no answer' that will sweep away the wounds of colonialism or even patriarchy that mark the speaker; not even the transcendent elements of 'air' and 'water'. There is only misrepresentation or the flawed head of the statue and the speaker herself who is represented in the poem as the woman with the scarred face. No authentic or pure solution can be found; only dissolution or the flawed head of the statue dissolving in the 'Irish rain'. Boland draws on the rain as a national characteristic which is appropriately fluid as the poem suggests little foundational sense of 'Irishness' beyond the pictures of the scarred heads of woman and statue that 'heals just enough to be a nation' or '[w]hat I have lost'.[75] As the monument of woman and nation becomes softened by the rain, gendered and national identity are dissolved as 'one flawed head' turn 'towards another', and both women are conceived in terms of loss, absence and misrepresentation.

Hence, in Boland's 'Anna Liffey' identity becomes lost, 'fluid', dissolving rather than resolving, and in this way, she resists the pull of more traditional conceptions of Irish womanhood. At the end of 'Anna Liffey', the speaker becomes 'lost' in 'the ocean' imploring that 'the spirit of place' become a 'lost soul again'. As Bhabha notices: "'The lost object – the national Heim – is repeated in the void that at once prefigures and pre-empts the 'unisonant' which makes it unheimlich; analogous to the incorporation that becomes the daemonic double of introjection and identification".[76] In 'Anna Liffey' the 'unisonant' national home is unhomely and so the woman at the in-between point of the threshold of a doorway turns off '[t]he harsh yellow/ Porch light' and stands in the darkness asking: 'Where is home now?' The heimlich becomes unheimlich; stood on the threshold, her 'vision' is set free from the confines of the 'brick house' while the spirit of Anna Liffey is released. Throughout the 'Anna Liffey' sequence, the speaker appeals to the fluidity of 'An Life' with the effect of deterritorializing rather than reterritorializing identity. In 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi' (1989), Smyth asks: 'How to emigrate from the myths of Motherland?' By the posthumous end of the 'Anna Liffey' sequence Boland has already done so.

Foley notes: 'The colonial state of deracination and shattered identity may well be exploited in terms of a fetishistic recuperation of imaginary origins, but it can also serve to expose the relative inefficacy of the kind of singular identity that ideology wishes to enforce'.[77] Within Boland's sequence 'Anna Liffey' this is the case with the effect that

> ... relations between the constructions of 'gender' and 'colonialism' are seen to throw into crisis the identity-thinking which characterizes the ideologies of patriarchy, imperialism, and bourgeois nationalism, the apprehension of these

> relations may be at least potentially productive of a more fluid and politically versatile sense of identity, one which can be used more effectively as an agent of resistance.[78]

In view of the ending of Boland's poem, the statue of Anna Livia can be surveyed from another perspective: as the floozie sits in the jacuzzi she can barely be seen because of the sheets of water pouring over her. She dissolves into the water, the fluidity of which makes her less monumental and also less easy to see. Her identity is therefore less recognizable. Smyth argues that Anna Livia is frozen in a monumental time and her identity is unreal or misrepresented, and so representation of Woman does not equal representation of the Real. In Boland, representation of female identity becomes dissolved and impossible to compose, and so she imagines the postscript – 'I was a voice'. To consider 'women's time', no matter how differential, as more 'real' is founded on an idea of authenticity that has created misrepresentation of the female in the first place. This is the problematic of decolonization.

However, women's time can gain critical impetus if it recognizes, as does Boland in her representation of Anna Liffey, that authentic notions of the 'real' are part of the misrepresentations of History. So there is no authentic outside place of transcendence where true time or identity are magically found. It is as if in order to be more present to herself she must notice her absence or the way in which her voice becomes committed to silence. How far this dissolution or loss of identity is enabling, disabling or both, is a question that feminist and post-colonial critics will continue to debate. An important effect or the 'agency' of 'Anna Liffey' is in the way that the poem makes readers listen to the silences amid the noise of myth; to ask why 'Irish' and 'female' identity are conceived in

terms of loss, to be aware of the discompositions of composition; to critique the

misrepresentations of representation and so on.

It is therefore apt when in 'Escape' from <u>The Lost Land</u> the speaker narrates

the story of a mother bird found too close to the road by a middle aged woman:

'Both of them escaped from the telling'. Escape is thus not found in

transcendence or truth but in misrepresentation as we slip from the telling.

Bhabha notices: "the subject is graspable only in the passage between

telling/told, between 'here' and 'somewhere else', and in this double scene the

very condition of cultural knowledge is the alienation of the subject".[79] It is not

surprising that in <u>The Lost Land</u> Boland calls not for female transcendence but

for attention to 'The Necessity For Irony' or 'double-time':[80]

> When I was young
> I studied styles: their use
> and origin. Which age
> was known for which
> ornament: and was always drawn
> to lyric speech, a civil tone.
> But I never thought
> I would have the need,
> as I do now, for a darker one:
> Spirit of irony,[81]

As a young woman she sought historical beauty over tables at 'antiques markets'

and rarely turned to see her daughter before her. When she later turns around,

her daughter has grown up and left and so a 'small history' has been lost while

the poet of 'Outside History' tried to tackle a larger one. Boland turns to irony as

her shadowy muse so as to allude to what was unseen and unheard, in her former

misrepresentations as a poet. Ironically, this turning to 'a darker tone' still takes

place within her customary 'lyric speech' and 'civil tone'.

Boland's call to irony as her 'caustic author/ of the past, or memory' can be

understood in terms of Bhabha's concept of 'double-time' and the in-between; as

a critical dissonance that brushes two moments and two perspectives together. In Kristeva's essay on 'The Dissident Intellectual' (1977) she imagines that 'the real cutting edge of dissidence' is found 'through the excesses of language', 'the unnameable, the unrepresentable, the void'.[82] The message here seems to be: listen for the dissonant and you will be dissident. Faced with a double temporality, Boland negotiates in her poems with the 'process of identity constituted by historical sedimentation (the pedagogical); and the loss of identity in the signifying process of cultural identification (the performative)'.[83] Readings of Kristeva's theorization can be resituated in relation to Boland's poetry whereby 'women's time' takes no flight into a sacred and saved space of the semiotic. Rather, 'women's time' is ironic and two-timing. Residing at an antagonistic in-between, 'women's time' ironically offers the potential to deconstruct the patriarchal from within to suggest that the Symbolic laws of History are less than water tight. Like the later poems of Heaney, Paulin, Muldoon and McGuckian, Boland's poetry swims out on its own searching for authentic alternative names. However, she eventually dissolves and ironizes such a plight. Boland's use of Anna Liffey reconstructs then deconstructs the figure of the woman as nation with the effect of challenging and decentering monuments of identity and History, within gendered national discourse and beyond. Boland's ironic move from monumental History to the double temporality of herstory, from the sacred to the secular, from the authentic into the differential, is a matter of life and death for the gendered national subject.

'Notes to Chapter Five'

[1] This chapter was first given as a paper at the Women-on-Ireland Network Conference at St. Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill on 27[th] June 1998 and I would like to thank my audience for their lively debate. It is to be published in Irish Texts and Post-Colonial Contexts, ed., Colin Graham and Glenn Hooper, (Manchester: University Press, forthcoming). Cf. Eavan Boland, Collected Poems, III Anna Liffey, 'Anna Liffey', (Manchester: Carcanet, 1995), p.201. All subsequent references to the Collected Poems are to this edition and are given in parentheses in the text. See Appendices 4 for a picture of the statue Anna Livia in Dublin.

[2] Cf. Benjamin, Part Seven of 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Illuminations, ed., Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (London: Jonathon Cape, 1970); Julia Kristeva, Women's Time', The Kristeva Reader, ed., Toril Moi, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 187-214; Homi Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation', The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.139-170. Kristeva's concept of women's time as moving beyond the historicist continuum is evocative of Benjamin's notion of a 'jetz-zeit' that will blast through History, replacing it with a historical materialism or a time that is more 'real'.

[3] Bhabha, p.142. With reference to E. Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.38.

[4] Benjamin, p.248.

[5] Ibid., p.251.

[6] Ailbhe Smyth, 'Declining identities (lit.and fig.)', Critical Survey, Vol.8, No.2, (1996), pp.143-58.

[7] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', The Irish Review, Vol.6, (1989), p.9. From Marina Warner, Monuments and Maidens, reference uncited by Smyth.

8 William Butler Yeats, The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, (London: Macmillan, 1933, repr.1963), 'Easter 1916', Michael Robartes and the Dancer, (1921), pp.202-5.

[9] Boland, 'Outside History', Poetry Nation Review, September/October (1990), pp.21-28.

[10] Boland, 'Unheroic', The Lost Land, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), p.23.

[11] Boland, 'Outside History', p.23.

[12] Gerardine Meaney, 'Myth, History and the Politics of Subjectivity: Eavan Boland and Irish Women's Writing', Women: A Cultural Review, Vol.4, No.2, Autumn 1993, pp.138. Meaney refers to Boland's 'A Kind of Scar: the woman poet in a national tradition', (Dublin: Attic, 1989), p.23.

[13] Ibid., p.137. Meaney refers here to Boland's 'A Kind of Scar', p.19 and Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', p.93.

[14] Meaney, Ibid., p.137.

[15] Judith Butler, 'The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva', Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, ed., Nancy Fraser & S. Barkley, (Indiana: University Press, 1991), p.163.

[16] Ibid., p.175.

[17] Kristeva, 'Women's Time', p.192.

[18] Margaret Mills Harper, 'First Principles and Last Things: Death and the Poetry of Eavan Boland and Audre Lorde', Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality ed., Susan Shaw Sailer, (Florida: University Press, 1997), p.182.

[19] Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return, or, Cosmos and History, (1949) trans., Williard R. Trask, (Princeton: University Press, 1954, 1974), ix.

[20] Ibid., p.103.

[21] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', p.18.

[22] Geoffrey Hartman, Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today, (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p.143.

[23] Cora Kaplan, 'Language and Gender' (1986), Dennis Walder, ed., Literature in the Modern World, (Oxford: Open University Press, 1990), pp.313-15.

[24] Benjamin, p.254.

[25] Carol Coulter, 'Feminism, Nationalism, and the Heritage of the Enlightenment', Gender and Colonialism, eds., Timothy P. Foley, Lionel Pilkington, Sean Ryder, Elizabeth Tilley, (Galway: University Press, 1995), p.198.

[26] Meaney, 'Myth, History and the Politics of Subjectivity', p.148.

[27] Cf. Giorgio Agamben, 'Time and History', Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience, (London: Verso, 1993), p.191.

[28] Timothy Foley, 'Introduction', Gender and Colonialism, p.10.

[29] Colin Graham, 'Subalternity and Gender: problems of post-colonial Irishness', Journal of Gender Studies, Vol.5, No.3, 1996, p.368.

[30] Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak' (1988), Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory, (London: Harvester, 1993), pp.66-111.

[31] Graham, 'Subalternity and Gender', p.370.

[32] Benjamin, p.255.

[33] Agamben, p.104.

[34] Clair Wills, 'Contemporary Irish Women Poets', Diverse Voices: Essays on Twentieth Century Women Writers in English, ed., Harriet Devine Jump, (London: Harvester, 1991), p.258.

[35] Meaney, 'Myth, History and the Politics of Subjectivity', p.137.

[36] Ibid., p.147.

[37] Meaney quoting Kristeva from 'Women's Time' in 'Myth, History and the Politics of Subjectivity', p.152. Kristeva, 'Women's Time', p.195.

[38] Ibid., p.153.

[39] S.F. Gallagher, Women in Irish Legend, Life and Literature, (Irish Literary Studies 14), (Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 1983), Lorna Reynolds, title essay, p.14. Taken from The Sons of Usnach, no details of edition or page number provided by Reynolds.

[40] This is evocative of the famous picture of Seamus Heaney depicted writing at a table in 1974 by Edward McGuire (1932-86) and held at the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin.

[41] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Part IX, Illuminations, ed., Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (London: Jonathon Cape, 1970), p.249.

[42] Eavan Boland, 'The Woman, The Place, The Poet', Poetry Nation Review, Vol.17, No.3, Jan-Feb 1991, pp.35-40.

[43] Ibid., p.39.

[44] Meaney, 'Myth, History and the Politics of Subjectivity', p.147. Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, trans., Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke, (Cornell: University Press, 1985), p.76. Following Margaret Whitford's translation in Luce Irigaray: Philsophy in the Feminine, (London: Routlege, 1991), p.71.

[45] Boland, 'Fever', The Journey, Collected Poems, p.108.

[46] Kristeva, 'Revolution in Poetic Language', The Kristeva Reader, pp.80-123.

[47] Butler, p.169.

[48] Meaney, 'Myth, History and the Politics of Subjectivity', p.141.

[49] Bhabha, p.157.

[50] Ibid., p.153.

[51] Ibid., p.148.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p.157.

[54] Gayatri Spivak, 'Can The Subaltern Speak?', pp.66-111.

[55] Smyth, 'Borderline Cross Talk', 'Women-on-Ireland Conference', 27-28[th] June 1998, St. Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, London.

[56] As Cora Kaplan explains in her essay on 'Language and Gender', in the picture by Odilon Redon entitled Silence, the woman in the picture is the material image of silence: 'A wraithlike madonna, still, and at the same time full of intense activity, she holds two fingers to her lips, and, perhaps, a cupped paw to her ear'. She is a

> speaking silence – image and injunction joined – she is herself spoken, twice spoken we might say – once by the artist who has located his silence in a female figure, and once again by the viewer who accepts as natural this abstract identification of woman = silence and the complementary imagining of women's speech as whispered, subvocal, the mere escape of trapped air ... shhhhhhh.

Cora Kaplan, 'Language and Gender', Literature in the Modern World, ed., Dennis Walder, (Oxford: Open University Press, 1990), p.313.

[57] Boland, 'Listen. This is the Noise of Myth', Collected Poems, p.125.

[58] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', p.22. Roisín Cowman, 'The Goose Herd', The Salmon, No.7, 1988.

[59] Smyth, Ibid., p.12.

[60] Smyth, 'Declining Identities', p.144.

[61] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', p.12.

[62] James Joyce, Anna Livia Plurabelle, (London: Faber, 1930), p.13.

[63] Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', p.8.

[64] Smyth, 'Declining Identities', p.148.

[65] Luke Gibbons, 'Identity Without a Centre: Allegory, History and Irish Nationalism', Cultural Studies, Vol.6, No.3, October 1992, pp.358-75. Gibbons gives no reference for Joyce.

[66] Preoccupation with aging has resonances within the poetry stretching back to Yeats in 'Among School Children'. Cf. W.B. Yeats, 'Among School Children', The Tower in Collected Poems, p.242-5. Concern for the aging female body draws on a universal female experience of aging to suggest that women world-wide become dispossessed of the words associated with youth and beauty by which women are usually judged and represented within patriarchal discourse. In this way, the experience of the dispossessed women need not be read as purely an 'Irish' problem. In certain ways, the above stanza is evocative of Adrienne Rich in The Dream of a Common Language (London: Norton, 1978) where in poems such as 'A Woman Dead in her Forties' (pp.53-58), the 'scarred, deleted torso' of the woman who has had a masectomy is recalled. Both Rich and Boland repeat statements for emphasis, certain phrases are formed in the imperative creating a sense of urgency and intimacy, and the poetic voice breaks down at points of high emotion as if there is a beyond the speaker cannot articulate. Boland writes lyrical poetry within an Irish tradition, where symbols of swans appear and the poetic voice sometimes becomes as demanding and all-encompassing as that of Yeats in The Tower (1928), which also presents a figure uncertain of the healing capacities of love. Yet she also writes within a feminist tradition where poetic language has been influenced by both Rich and Cixous. Smyth's prose essay incorporates poetry, conflicting voices and bald statements, which could be said to mirror the style of Boland. Boland and Smyth are drawing on the strong assertiveness of a feminist writing tradition. A more complicated aspect of this argument is that Joyce's text also uses the poetic devices of shifting thought processes and disjointed cadences. Therefore, it is difficult to theorize how far Boland's poem constitutes a move towards l'écriture féminine when this style has also been deployed by a male modernist writer. As the comparison of Joyce's Anna Livia with Boland's 'Anna Liffey' demonstrates, they both deploy images of fluidity in their representation of the female body. However, differences between Joyce and Boland lie less in their gender and more in their genre since Joyce writes in what may loosely be termed chapters of 'prose' while Boland chooses to write poems. What is noticeable is how the writing of Rich, Cixous and Boland invests in poetry as the genre in which to create l'écriture féminine or a more womanly mode of writing.

[67] Seamus Heaney, 'Station Island', Station Island, (London: Faber,1984), p.94.

[68] The ending of Boland's poem can be compared with American female poets as easily as it could be located within a specifically Irish literary tradition. For instance, these last stanzas call up not only the voice of Rich in the title poem of Diving into the Wreck, (1973) from The Fact of a Doorframe, (London: Verso, 1981), p.161. Also Sylvia Plath in 'Ariel' or the image of the figure escaping from selfhood by walking into the water in 'Suicide of Egg Rock', Collected Poems, (London: Faber, 1981), p.115, p.239. It is worrying how in the work of each of these three poets, self-fulfillment is found in death. The space of death becomes the moment of 'real' identity whereby the self becomes as naked as at birth so that in Plath's poem: 'Everything glittered like blank paper' which relates to Smyth's tabula rasa. These poets also suggest that self presence demands self erasure.

[69] Boland, 'Anna Liffey: A Woman Painted on a Leaf', p.211.

[70] Margaret Mills Harper, p.181.

[71] Ibid., pp.188-89.

[72] Boland, 'The Lost Land', The Lost Land, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), p.38.

[73] Ibid., 'Witness', p.15.

[74] Ibid., 'The Scar', pp.19-20.

[75] Ibid., 'A Habitable Grief', p.29 and 'The Mother Tongue', p.31.

[76] Bhabha, p.165.

[77] Foley, p.10.

[78] Ibid., p.11.

[79] Bhabha, p.150.

[80] Ibid., p.144.

[81] Boland, 'The Necessity for Irony', The Lost Land, pp.54-55.

[82] Kristeva, 'A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident', The Kristeva Reader ed., Toril Moi, p.300.

[83] Bhabha, p.153.

SECTION THREE

INTERNATIONALISM AND POSTNATIONALISM:
BEYOND THE TRIBE?

We must try to save the republican heritage by transcending
the limits of the nation-state.

Jürgen Habermas.

Post-colonialism is no longer bound to celebrate the advent of the nation,

Colin Graham.[1]

Migrancy

It is noticeable how many of the poets discussed in this thesis have lived and

worked away from Ireland. Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland have both taught

in the USA. Like Paul Muldoon and Tom Paulin, and James Joyce and Samuel

Beckett before them, Sara Berkeley's move is long-term, and she currently lives

in America and works for a computer company in San Francisco. Her writing

has also moved away from the subject matter of Ireland and provides us with a

stark contrast to the place-logic that informed Heaney's early poetry from

Wintering Out (1972). Considering her poetry as 'migrant', the next chapter

explores her poetic landscapes to argue that Berkeley moves away from original

models of Irish nationality such as those drawn on by William Butler Yeats

during the Irish Literary Revival which were identified in the first chapter.

The previous section noticed the way in which women writers called into

question the homogeneity of Irish cultural nationalism, and explored how

national identity is a means of both affirming and occluding otherness.

Discussion of Boland in relation to a national tradition problematized moves to

extricate subjectivity from the limitations of the nation-state. The title of this section is taken from Heaney's poem 'Tollund' (1994) and indicates the necessity for relating the following chapter on Berkeley back to the previous sections of this thesis. For example, Section One, 'Rhizomes and Bordercrossings', understood the poetry in relation to post-colonial theorization, and Irish identity was discussed in terms of Deleuzian 'deterritorialization', 'délire' and 'doubling'. Chapter One argued that Heaney's poem 'Tollund' reinscribes his earlier poem, 'The Tollund Man' (1972) with the effect of travelling routes or 'flight paths' away from rooted conceptions of Irish identity into a more 'footloose', hybrid and international terrain. The following argument is that Heaney's desire to be 'at home beyond the tribe' is also taken up by Berkeley.[2] However, this section demonstrates how such an assertion must be thought in the terms of a question, whereby it is not taken for granted that Heaney's intentions are unproblematically played out. Examining Berkeley's poetry, the next chapter criticizes attempts to move 'beyond' the nation so as to establish how the relationship between subjectivity, gender and place is played out at a complex level within the work of a younger generation.

In Nations Without Nationalism (1993), Julia Kristeva notices how: 'Women .. are particularly vulnerable to a possible support of volkgeist. The biological fate that causes us to be the site of the species chains us to space: home, native soil, motherland (matrie)'. Here, Kristeva notices the role of women within ethnic nationalism as reproducers. Against the rooting of women alongside the national, Kristeva addresses the issues of 'migrancy' and the 'trans-national': 'when I say that I have chosen cosmopolitanism, this means that I have, against

origins and starting from them, chosen a transnational or international position situated at the crossing of boundaries'. She draws on

> Augustine's civitas peregrina advocated as the only state of freedom, against the state of oppression, that of pilgrimage: tearing oneself away from places to accomplish universal mutual assistance, but also tearing oneself away from any identity (including one's own) in order to accomplish subjective fulfillment in the boundlessness of caritas.

Kristeva's notion of a 'trans-national' dispositioning 'at the crossing of boundaries' imagines that 'the nation [can] be potentially stripped of the social aspects of its totality to the advantage of the greatest growth of its members'.[3] Such a 'trans-nationalism' can be problematized alongside theorists of international relations so as to ask what bearing postmodern formulations have on how we read the politics of nationalist, post-colonial, feminist and post-nationalist identity formation.

Building on discussion from Section Two which explored the relationship between nationalism and feminism in terms of 'The National Body and Fluid Identities', discussion of Berkeley will develop the dominant theme of 'migrancy' in relation to the previous concepts of 'disidentification', 'the inauthentic', misrepresentation' and the 'necessity for irony'. Entitled 'Nomadic Subjects: Sara Berkeley's Facts About Water' (1994), the next chapter problematizes feminist fluid identities in relation to post-nationalist nomadicity, so as to situate Berkeley in terms of previous discussion about deterritorialization and gender.[4] Bringing together the work of Hélène Cixous's Rootprints (1997), Rosi Braidotti's Nomadic Subjects (1994) and Luce Irigaray from Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche (1991), the next chapter will note the connections between Berkeley's nomadicity and that of the other poets, whose work has been compared with the theoretical agenda of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[5]

Discussing 'migrancy' within the poetry, this section unpicks Kearney's observation in Across the Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s (1988) that the 'migrant minds' of Irish artists 'think otherwise', with the effect of transgressing the monoliths of gendered and national identity inscribed within Irish political discourse, and within the 'myths of motherland'.[6] At a philosophical level, Kearney connects 'migrancy' with the political agenda of post-nationalism so as to provide a critique of nationalist narratives drawn on at the foundation of the Irish Free State. Kearney's work in Across the Frontiers (1988) moves away from his initial publication of Myth and Motherland (1984) which is preoccupied with grounded conceptions of the nation, and this movement is comparable with that of the poets under discussion. Kearney's Postnationalist Ireland (1997) hopes to turn away from ethnic nationalism with its need for purity, and chooses to focus attention on the international and European aspects of Irish politics, culture and philosophy.[7] It is necessary, then, to assess the political implications of Kearney's theorization in relation to his assertion that Irish artists are moving away from traditional conceptions of the nation. Kearney's debate oscillates between noticing the tensions between nationalism, internationalism, post-nationalism and post-colonialism yet their relationship is not fully unravelled within his argument. This is required before returning to an exploration of the representation of identity within the work of Berkeley.

This section will frame the poetry of Sara Berkeley by asking what effects internationalism and post-nationalism have on her representations of subjectivity. Serving as an opening into the theoretical terrain of her poetry, what follows is a necessary outline of debate concerning the concepts of internationalism and post-nationalism which inform my readings of the poems. In order to tease out the

relationship between nationalism, internationalism, post-colonialism and post-nationalism, I refer to the work of Michael Ignatieff, Declan Kiberd, Tom Nairn, Jürgen Habermas and Michael Shapiro. Using this combination of a critic from Ireland, theorists of international relations, political philosophy and the postmodern, what follows provides a more complex understanding of the politics and ethics of the post-nationalist terrain visited by Richard Kearney. Separating out each term, this section explores the politics and ethics underlying post-nationalist theorization so as to ask: what are the positive and negative aspects of post-nationalist political philosophy, and how does this affect readings of the poets and identity formation? Referring to the work of Colin Graham, Kearney's post-nationalism is resituated in order to argue that it is necessary for post-colonial criticism to question the authenticity relied on in modern assertions of nationality, and such a dis-positioning provides a critical practice for evaluation of the intellectual agenda of Berkeley's poetry.

Nationalism, Internationalism and Post-Nationalism

In order to understand the dynamics of Kearney's discussion about post-nationalism in relation to the work of Berkeley, it is necessary to identify the sources from which he draws. One of the contributors to his outline of 'civic', 'ethnic', 'romantic', 'economic', 'separatist' and 'cultural' nationalisms, is the Canadian journalist, Michael Ignatieff.[8] In Blood and Belonging: Journies into the New Nationalism (1994), Ignatieff ruminates on the modern meaning of the word 'nation', and reminds us that as one of the first nation-states, English nationalism was intimately connected with imperialism. Historically, England is

also a nation where republican values have had little real impact and sovereignty

has rested less with 'the people'. Attacking the nation-state, Ignatieff quotes

from Theodor Adorno: 'Nationalism no longer quite believes in itself'.[9] A

contentious remark for emerging post-colonial nations, this is important since it

alludes to the insincerity and inauthenticity of nationalist rhetoric. Ignatieff

suspects that

> ... such insincerity may be a functional requirement of language which is
> burdened with the task of insisting upon such a high volume of untruths. The
> nationalist vision of an ethnically pure state, for example, has the task of
> convincing ordinary people to disregard stubbornly adverse sociological
> realities, like the fact that most societies are not and have not been ethnically
> pure.[10]

A point surely won by Ignatieff's invocation of the Anglo-Saxon nation-state

which by its very name suggests that it is founded upon a hybridity between the

Angles and Saxons. While recognizing the differences in political agendas

between British imperialist nationalism and Irish decolonizing nationalism,

Ignatieff concludes: 'no modern society can beat to the rhythm of a single

national will'.[11] The appropriate answer to this assertion is that modern societies

try to do so, thus ignoring the excess of the people over the nation alluded to in

my discussion of Boland. This begs the question of what Ignatieff means by the

'new nationalism' hinted at in the title of his book and whether it is possible to

think past the essentialism upon which the nation-state relies.

Ignatieff's 'new nationalism' rests upon his conclusion that 'fantasy,

insincerity and inauthenticity' are the themes of ethnic nationalism so that

'[b]eing yourself is what ethnic nationalism will not allow'.[12] In place of the

limitations of ethnic nationalism, Ignatieff looks towards civic nationalism as

more representative of the people, more democratic and more likely to achieve

the goals of republicanism (liberty, fraternity and equality). However, it is

necessary to critique his too easy link between civic nationalism and the 'real' or

'being yourself'. It is precisely such a tension between the nation-state, being

and inauthenticity, with which Boland's poetry battled without being able to

posit any more authentic sense of subjectivity in relation to History and

nationality, with which to fill the gaps of modern 'fantasy' and 'insincerity'. In

this way, Boland's poetry remains trapped within the limits of the nation-state,

positing no redemptive truth beyond to be staged as a moment of Being or the

Real, save a resonant silence. It is only in the poet's oscillation between

belonging and dispossession, the heimlich and unheimlich, that the critic can be

provided with what Homi Bhabha terms a 'double-time' or dissonance by which

an ironic critique of the subject's positioning within the history of the modern

nation-state can take place.

In his essay 'Modern Ireland: Postcolonial or European' (1997), Declan

Kiberd goes some way to acknowledging the limitations of the nation-state. He

quotes from Patrick Pearse's essay 'The Murder Machine', where one of the

founding fathers of Irish nationalism states anxieties that are akin to those of

Eavan Boland's essays: 'the very organizations which exist in Ireland or

champion freedom show no disposition themselves to accord freedom; they

challenge a great tyranny but they erect their own little tyrannies'.[13] Kiberd

notices how the history of independent Ireland bears a remarkable similarity to

the phases of decolonization charted by Frantz Fanon in The Wretched of the

Earth (1961), whereby the first stage of post-colonial nationalism mirrors the

tyrannies of imperialist nationalism with its need to assert a homogeneous

national power in the face of colonial aggression.[14] However, critiquing too easy

alignments between Ireland and Europe such as the post-nationalist pro-Europe

argument of Kearney and the politician John Hume,[15] Kiberd alludes to the history of colonialism in Ireland to make connections between Irish nationalism and third world decolonization. Kiberd's essay configures a cartography that situates Ireland at the margins of post-imperial Europe or, as suggested by Carol Coulter, 'between the first and third worlds'. Coulter views Ireland as first world in history and third world in geography.[16] It is therefore not surprising that Kiberd finds the slogan 'we are the new Europeans' an inadequate statement to describe Ireland in the 1990s, and expresses a scepticism in the face of Europeanization which he implicitly views as an internationalism that smacks of neo-colonialism: 'a post-colonial Ireland had many important differences from a mainly post-imperial Europe'.[17]

Hence, internationalism and post-nationalism are not always welcome concepts for certain Irish post-colonial critics and political activists. On the one hand, internationalism can be linked with multinational corporations and a capitalist economy that forms a   neo-colonialism which is identified by Kiberd in his description of an 'international élite' from 'multinational companies' who visit Ireland 'as tourists in search of the exotic', and is developed in his fears of a 'European superstate' which would hardly be attractive to emerging third world nationalisms. However, it is important to recognize how connections with continental Europe have helped the Irish national cause not just in terms of historical French support against Britain, but also in terms of the economic aid offered by the EU .

A prominent voice in the 'new nationalism' debate, Tom Nairn, discounts the possibility of a neo-colonial 'European superstate' in a continent so politically divided as Europe,[18] and identifies a significant difference between

'internationalism' and 'internationality'. For Nairn, 'internationality' is not left wing and he connects it with the neo-colonial capitalism of American multinational corporations. In his essay 'Internationalism and the Second Coming' (1996), he notices how historically, cosmopolitanism slid into troubling confusion in the post-1789 world so that internationalism became more difficult to distinguish from imperialism, as waves of metropolitan civilization imparters began to work, 'each one convinced of his innate right to uplift and lead the way. Great Powers make internationality their own by a sleight of hand which seems perfectly natural when one happens to be holding most of the good cards'.[19] Against this he argues for 'internationalism' between regions as more democratic than the 'internationality' of the 'Great Powers' or nation-states:

> Internationalism can only be built upon a certain style of nationalism whose construction rests more upon democracy than upon ethnos. A durable and bearable disorder will rely more upon chosen identities and less upon the classical motifs of language, folk, custom and blood.[20]

Here, Nairn makes an important differentiation between ethnic nationalism and a more democratic form of nationalism. Nairn's disordered 'new nationalism' is close to the 'civic nationalism' proposed by Ignatieff, the implicitly more democratic 'post-nationalist' Federal Europe of Regions imagined by Kearney and Hume, and the republican heritage that lies beyond the nation-state, cited by Habermas in the epigraph to this section.

Questioning the limits of the political and just how democratic is the nation-state, Habermas notices in his essay, 'Three Normative Models of Democracy' (1996), how both the 'liberal view' and the 'republican view' of the modern nation-state 'lies not primarily in the protection of equal private rights but in the guarantee of an inclusive opinion – and will-formation in which free and equal citizens reach an understanding on which goals and norms lie in the equal

interest of all'.[21] Hence: "For republicans rights ultimately are nothing but determinations of the prevailing political will, while for liberals some rights are always grounded in a 'higher law' of ... reason".[22] A 'new nationalism' must be antagonistic towards the 'old-internationalism' of the nation-state which is equated with the 'all-the-same-ism' disliked by feminist critics of Irish nationality such as Gerardine Meaney and Ailbhe Smyth, while also recognizing the legitimacy of a collective politics of decolonization. The Irish poet seeking to critique the limits of the nation-state in favour of an international perspective away from Ireland risks treading across this tension.

Such a minefield has been carefully crossed by Homi Bhabha in his essay on 'DissemiNation' (1994) which provides a touchstone for much of the discussion in this thesis. The positive difficulty with Bhabha's writing lies in the way his theorization juggles with the differing demands of nationalism, post-nationalism, post-colonialism and postmodernism, while refusing to simplify their relationship. The effect of this is Bhabha's richly wrought analysis of the locations of culture which is useful not only for Post-Colonial Studies but also for the wider realm of political theory. Nikos Papastergiadis provides a path through 'Ambivalence in Cultural Theory' (1996) and taking smaller strides, he undresses the density of Bhabha's prose layer by layer so as to provide the following argument:

> The public sphere, in a liberal democracy allows no space for heterogeneity, and a politics of difference becomes equated with the threat of fragmentation. The nation state has always been poised over a precarious paradox: it has sought to defend the rights of minorities and to preserve the right to dissent, while at the same time insisting that the nation must be inspired by unifying themes. The nation is seen as a container whose centrist institutions must not be challenged even while it continues to evolve through the incorporation of differences. From this perspective, if diversity can only be secured and affirmed within a broader unity, then multiculturalism is no more than a slight extension to the prior politics of assimilation.[23]

Via Fanon, Bhabha criticizes first generation nationalism for repeating the

structures of imperialism upon which the foundation of the nation-state depends.

The need for essentialist versions of identity is shown to be connected with the

imperialist desire for a homogeneous self that must be called into

question if decolonization is to fully take place.

Bhabha demonstrates the emergence of post-colonial agency in the twixt of

displacement, demonstrating a crisis of signification within the 'double-time' and

'contested space' of modern culture.[24] As we have seen in previous chapters,

against a liberal bourgeois politics of pluralist multicultural assimilation, Bhabha

posits, alongside Kristeva, an attention to the differential. This is comparable

with the 'dialogic conception' envisaged by Habermas whereby he argues:

'Politics may not be assimilated to a hermeneutical process of self-explication of

a shared form of life or collective identity'. The way in which the democracy of

the modern nation-state attempts to assimilate political discourses to 'the

clarification of collective ethical self-understanding' such as that of 'the common

good' is put under pressure by Habermas, in the vein of Bhabha's critique of a

liberal multicultural pluralism.[25] Bhabha's anti-essentialist model of subjectivity

has been criticized by post-colonial nationalist critics who argue that it repeats

the very structures of violence that fracture and dissipate the knowledge system

of non-Western cultures. Vivek Dhareshwar and Manthia Diawara have naively

accused Bhabha of being postmodern and eurocentric, as though postmodernism

equals eurocentrism and thus imperialism.[26] However, as this thesis continues to

demonstrate, it is not the postmodern formulations of Bhabha that are imperialist

and eurocentric, but modern assertions of a homogenous national identity upon

which colonialism first depended.

In his essay 'The European Nation-State – Its Achievements and Its Limits.

On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship' (1996), Habermas attacks

the politics of the European nation-state. He notices how in German, the concept

'nation' ambiguously refers to a '*Volksnation*' or a nation of collective citizens

and a '*Staatsnation*' or a nation of individuals which is a prepolitical nation of

legally empowered citizens. Habermas argues:

> In view of both the growing pluralism inside national societies and the global problems national governments face from the outside, the nation-state can no longer provide an appropriate frame for the maintenance of democratic citizenship within the foreseeable future. What generally seems to be necessary is the development of capacities for political action on a level above and between nation-states.[27]

Habermas notices the tension between 'multicultural differentiation' and 'trends

towards globalization'. He argues in the vein of Bhabha that

> ... today, all of us live in pluralist societies that move further away from the format of a nation-state based on a culturally more or less homogenous population. The diversity in cultural forms of life, ethnic groups, world-views and religions is either huge already, or at least growing.[28]

Postmodern theorist of international relations, Michael Shapiro, also notices

how notions of order and identity, based on the state and nation are in huge flux,

especially in the post-Cold War period. Nationalism and post-nationalism appear

to be reactions to these changing notions caused by cross-cutting cleavages such

as Europeanization (Brusselization), globalization (capitalism) and regionalism,

as well as more complex forms of social dislocation. These indications could

lead us along the path provided by Habermas to conclude that we are

increasingly living in a postmodern condition, characterized by an increase in

spatial dislocation, increase in the speed of communication, increase in the

permeability of borders, and a decrease in the 'modern' pillars of society such as

simple identities, hierarchical political structures, and relatively clear notions of

'belonging' and 'nationhood'. Hence, Habermas argues that a 'state-centred

understanding of politics' is no longer viable and in place of this he puts a

'discourse theory' whereby:

> Proceduralized popular sovereignty and a political system tied in to the
> peripheral networks of the political public sphere go hand-in-hand with the
> image of a decentered society. This concept of democracy no longer needs to
> operate with the notion of a social whole centered in the state and imagined as a
> goal-oriented subject writ large.[29]

For Habermas: 'According to the republican view, the people are the bearers of

a sovereignty that cannot be delegated: I their sovereign character the people

cannot have others represent them'.[30] These trends identified by theorists of

international relations need to be considered alongside the deterritorialization

that takes place within the work of the poets in this thesis, so as to establish the

political and ethical potential of a decentered model of the nation-state for post-

nationalist and postmodern subjectivities.

In his essay 'Moral Geographies and the Ethics of Post-Sovereignty' (1994),

Shapiro writes of the 'normalizing power of the state' and 'its control over

identity and the interpretation of space'. He argues:

> The practice of an ethic sensitive to what has been silenced and forgotten must
> recognize that all fixed models of order produce marginalized forms of
> difference. The new post-sovereign spaces of encounter, if they are not to
> reinscribe forms of nonrecognition, must therefore allow for perpetual
> encounters ... To allow a community to exist in this context is to seek replacing
> the policing of identity with a politics of identity. It is an ethic that requires
> encouraging encounters within a frame that recognizes and accepts the
> ambiguities and instabilities of the codes through which different people create
> their subjectivities and useful and intelligible spaces.[31]

This is close to Homi Bhabha's notion of the 'differential' and Butler's concept

of 'disidentification', whereby modern and essentialist versions of identity are

shown not to hold, and to be no longer desirable. In inscribing such a politics of

the differential, these theorists show how deconstructive formulations can be

utilized in forging a post-colonial and post-nationalist consciousness, that fosters

a less essentialist and homogenous politics in opposition to the absolutist

confines of the modern nation-state upon which imperialism was founded.

An Excess of the People Over the Nation

The prevalent debates of postmodernist theorists within international relations

such as Shapiro are to some extent touched on by Richard Kearney in

Postnationalist Ireland (1997).[32] In his theorization of post-nationalism, Kearney

claims not to denounce nationalism – Irish or British – but to reinterrogate its

critical implications. This involves realizing, as does Ignatieff, that far too often,

the sins of nationalism have been laid exclusively on the Irish side, with the

result that Britain's implication in the nationalist quarrel is conveniently

occluded.[33] Kearney argues for a 'new nationalism' or 'post-nationalism' which

is summed up by his epigraph drawn from Paul Ricoeur: 'In modern republics

the origin of sovereignty is in the people, but now we recognize that we have

many peoples. And many peoples means many centres of sovereignty – we have

to deal with that'.[34] Ricoeur's statement precedes Habermas's comment on the

limitations of the nation-state which does not fulfill the republican politics upon

which it is supposed to be based. In Ireland, nationalism has been imagined as

synonymous with republicanism. However, Kearney's argument is that, all too

often, the nation-state loses sight of 'the people' it is supposed to and cannot

fully represent. In this way, his post-nationalist vision is haunted by the concerns

of the republican basis from which Irish nationalism was initiated.

Kearney provides an outline of the relationship between postmodernism and post-nationalism as he criticizes the centralizing effects of nationalism in favour of less limited modes of identification that are comparable with the arguments of Bhabha, Kristeva and Habermas in their insistence on the 'differential'. In his chapter 'Postnationalism and postmodernity', Kearney begins with a section entitled 'Beyond Nationalism' and proceeds cautiously: 'To critique the nation-state is not to repudiate all forms of nationalism. It is unwise, in particular, to ignore how certain forms of nationalism have served, historically, as legitimate ideologies of resistance and emancipation'. This comment connects back to Nairn's differentiation between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism or, between 'hegemonic and resistant' forms of nationalism; 'those that emancipate and those that incarcerate'.[35]

However, Kearney's argument in a following section, 'Towards A Political Theory Of The Postmodern', becomes utopian:

> The postmodern theory of power puts the 'modern' concept of the nation-state into question. It points towards a decentralizing and disseminating of sovereignty which, in the European context at least, signals the possibility of new configurations of federal-regional government.[36]

Kearney follows this by drawing on Jean François Lyotard's assertion from <u>The Postmodern Condition</u> (1979): 'Let us wage war on totality. Let us activate the differences ...'[37] Such a swift move from philosophy to political theory is problematic: how the differing nation-states of Europe are supposed to magically metamorphose into a 'new configuration of federal-regional government' is left unexplained at any practical level.

Whereas John Hume's politics suggest concrete moves beyond an insular ethnic nationalism to a political strategy that attempts to get beyond national division by emphasizing Ireland's role in Europe, Kearney's writing is removed

from any sense of what 'disseminating sovereignty' would mean. He also

completely ignores the problematic case of the Balkans, where it is perhaps less

easy to skip over ethnic nationalism in pursuit of his post-nationalist vision.

Kearney's post-nationalism becomes too easily equated with a liberal concept of

internationalism which is supposed to provide him with a retreat from the

totalizing tendencies of ethnic nationalism. Imagining that an 'international

world view' will cure us from nationalist insularity and separatism overlooks

how the international world picture is not so rosy and governed by nation-states

whose politics are far from his 'new configurations of federal-regional

government'.

Moreover, there is confusion in Kearney's philosophy over the meaning of

'internationalism' which is regarded as *the same as* a critique of nationalism and

post-nationalism. International Relations theory tends to hold onto the central

concept of nationality whilst looking at the interrelations between different

states. A post-nationalist vision of Europe theorizes the crosscutting of identities

and attempts to address non-statehood such as in European Studies which

debates the feasibility of a Europe of Regions (drawn on by Kearney). In

Turbulence in World Politics (1990), James Rosenau makes the distinction

between 'international politics' that are breaking down along with the nation-

state and 'post-international politics'.[38] Rosenau argues that the boundaries

between domestic and international politics are disintegrating, and that there can

no longer be pure theories of either domestic politics or International Relations.

According to Rosenau, this is because the nation-state no longer has such

importance as a political entity when the interactions that sustain world politics

unfold without the direct involvement of nations or states. The old ideas of

nationalism coexist with powerful international and paranational bodies which were considered by Kiberd as a product of late capitalism, and parodied in terms of Eurocrats visiting Ireland as they would a Celtic theme park.

In a later chapter, Kearney develops his theorization of the postmodern and the post-nationalist into the vision of a federal-regional 'Council of Islands of Britain and Ireland' that has no politically centralized sovereignty. Kearney views the post-modern largely at the level of deconstruction and he does not make the important connections between post-nationalism, postmodernity and capitalism, that are noticed by Kiberd. Once again, Kearney's argument lacks any real political strategy and reads as philosophical discussion rather than as a practical politics. For example, he attempts to persuade any doubtful Irish nationalists who remain unimpressed by postmodern theorization that this would not be a new arrangement but a pre-modern one associated with a 'bardic/ druidic Ireland' that "was predicated upon principles of 'republican egalitarianism'", as though this piece of information would be enough to bring about Nairn's new nationalism . Dragging in the Celtic scholars Proinsias McCana and John Toland, Kearney argues that '[p]olitical centralization was originally forced upon these islands ... by the need to respond to invasions – especially from the Romans, Norsemen and Normans'.[39] Here we return to the concerns of Homi Bhabha's 'DissemiNation' which identifies the repetition of imperialist strategies in nationalist resistance.

What is more persuasive in Kearney's discussion is when he turns his understanding of post-nationalism to analysis of the deterritorializing aspects of contemporary Irish poetry. In his chapter 'Myth and nation in modern Irish poetry', he notices how McGuckian and Muldoon succeed in 'rediscovering

home away from home, in rereading native myths of sovereignty from an other

place – uncharted, unhomely, <u>unheimlich</u>', which leads to the

'desacramentalizing of fatherland and motherland'.[40] These assertions have been

unpicked and developed in previous chapters on Muldoon and McGuckian. The

intention of the final part is to push Kearney's notions of post-nationalism and

internationalism to their limits, by examining the politics and ethics put in place

by the 'migrant mind' of Berkeley.

In his essay 'Post-Nationalism/ Post-Colonialism: Readings of Irish Culture'

(1994), Colin Graham notices, as do the theorists drawn on in this section, how

'the very idea of nationality which was used by decolonizing people to coalesce

themselves into a coherent political force was itself transferred to the colonies by

imperialist ideology'. Graham goes beyond this well rehearsed point by taking

the logic of his argument one step further than Kearney when he argues that

'[p]ost-nationalism evolves from rather than rejects the nation; but its

dependency on the maintenance of the conceptual value of the nation goes

unrecognized'. Post-nationalism is therefore an 'example of how the concept of

the nation continues to circumscribe critical and theoretical discourses which

appear to go beyond it'. Graham identifies how, in Kearney's analysis,

nationalism is being left behind with reluctance and nostalgia, and he notices

how

> ... for Kearney, the national is still the defining site of cultural indigenity and
> authenticity: <u>our</u> writers and <u>our</u> singers (<u>our</u> culture will allow <u>us</u> to retain a
> grasp on a real cultural base while addressing ourselves to the post-nationalist
> European situation).[41]

Graham worries that

> Post-colonialism, as a theory of culture, can initially seem to be liable to fall into
> parallel forms of stasis. As a critique it can appear to be tied to a narrative

which celebrates the entity of the nation as the logical and correct outcome of the process of anti-colonial struggle.[42]

However, he makes a point that cannot be emphasized too often: 'in recent years post-colonialism has been involved in building a critique of the ideology and praxis of nationality in the post-colonial world'. Here, Graham cites Ranajit Guha, who describes post-colonial India as 'an historic failure of the nation to come into its own'. Graham concludes that it is this 'combination of an awareness of concepts of the nation as both formative and restrictive in Irish culture that marks post-colonialism as a radical way forward in Irish culture and theory'.[43] This combination of an awareness of the nation as both 'formative' and 'restrictive' in Irish culture is central to my readings of contemporary Irish poetry and, in view of this, I criticize the poetry according to a post-colonial theorization that envisages the political and ethical consequences of such a tension.

The following chapter will demonstrate how, like the poetry of many of the poets discussed in this thesis, Berkeley engages in a project of deterritorialization that can be defined alongside a tendency within contemporary Irish poetry to move away from an authentic sense of 'Irishness' to the point of leaving behind her roots. Where, then, is poetry from 'across the frontiers' of 'Ireland in the 1990s' coming from, where is it heading, and how far are myths of authentic identity, problematized within the poetry? Can the 'migrant minds' of Berkeley's nomadic subjects get 'beyond the tribe' and does her poetry manage to extricate subjectivity from the confines of the national tradition which was criticized by Boland?

'Notes to Section Three'

[1] Jürgen Habermas, 'The European Nation-State – Its Achievements and Its Limits. On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship', Mapping the Nation, ed., Gopal Balakrishnan and introduced by Benedict Anderson, New Left Review, (London: Verso, 1996), p.293; Colin Graham, 'Post-Nationalism/ Post-Colonialism: Reading Irish Culture, Irish Studies Review, No.8, Autumn, 1994, p.37.

[2] Seamus Heaney, 'Tollund', The Spirit Level, (London: Faber, 1996), p.69.

[3] Julia Kristeva, Nations without Nationalism, trans., Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.33, p.16, p.22, p.42.

[4] Sara Berkeley, Facts About Water, (Manchester: Bloodaxe, 1994).

[5] Luce Irigaray from Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche, trans., Gillian C. Gill, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Hélène Cixous, Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing, ed., Mirielle Calle-Gruber, trans., Eric Prenowitz, (London: Routledge, 1997); Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[6] Richard Kearney, "Introduction: 'Thinking Otherwise'", Across the Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s, ed., (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), pp.7-29.

[7] Kearney, Myth and Motherland, A Field Day Pamphlet, No.5, (Derry: Field Day Theatre Company Ltd, 1984); Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy, (London: Routledge, 1997).

[8] Michael Ignatieff, Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism, (London: Vintage, 1994), p.3.

[9] Ibid.,p.186. Cf. Theodor Adorno, 'The Meaning of Working Through the Past' (1977), Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords, trans., Henry Pickford, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p.98. In Pickford's translation, Adorno says: 'Nationalism does not completely believe in itself anymore, and yet it is a political necessity because it is the most effective means of motivating people to insist on conditions that are, viewed objectively, obsolete'.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., pp.187-88.

[13] Declan Kiberd, 'Modern Ireland: Postcolonial or European', Not On Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism, ed., Stuart Murray, (Exeter: University Press, 1997), p.82. Cf. Patrick Pearse, 'The Murder Machine', A Significant Irish Educationalist: Educational Writings of Patrick Pearse, ed., Séamus O Buachalla, (Cork: Mercier, 1980), p.352.

[14] Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture', The Wretched of the Earth, (London: Penguin, 1961, 1965), pp.166-200.

[15] Cf. John Hume, 'Europe of the Regions', Across the Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s, ed., Richard Kearney, (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988).

[16] Carol Coulter, Ireland: between the first and the third worlds, (Dublin: LIP Attic, 1990).

[17] Kiberd, 'Modern Ireland', Not On Any Map, p.93.

[18] Cf. Tom Nairn, 'Supra-Nationalism and Europe', The Break-Up of Britain, (London: Verso, 1981), pp.306-228.

[19] Nairn, 'Internationalism and the Second Coming', Mapping the Nation, pp.271-272.

[20] Ibid., p.275.

[21] Habermas, 'Three Normative Models of Democracy', Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political, ed., Seyla Benhabib, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), p.22.

[22] Cf. F.I. Michelman, 'Conceptions of Democracy in American Constitutional Argument: Voting Rights', Florida Law Review, Vol.41, No,3, July 1989, p.446f.

[23] Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Ambivalence in Cultural Theory: Reading Homi Bhabha's "DissemiNation"', Critical Studies, Writing the Nation: Self and Country in Post-Colonial Imagination, ed., John C. Howley, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), p.181.

[24] Ibid., p.188.

[25] Habermas, 'Three Normative Models of Democracy', Democracy and Difference, pp.23-4.

[26] Cf. Vivek Dhareshwar, 'Mimicry and/as Identity: Cultural Poetics of the *Colonial Habitus*', Mapping Colonialism, Group for the Study of Colonialism, (Berkeley: California, 1988); Manthia Diawara, 'The Nature of Mother in Dreaming Rivers', Third Text, 13, Winter 1990-1.

[27] Habermas, 'The European Nation-State', Mapping the Nation, p.289.

[28] Ibid., p.293

[29] Habermas, 'Three Normative Models of Democracy', Democracy and Difference, p.27.

[30] Ibid., p.29.

[31] Shapiro, 'Moral Geographies and the Ethics of Post-Sovereignty', Public Culture, Vol. 6, No.3, Spring 1994, p.499.

[32] Theorists used in Kearney's research are mostly continental philosophers, and although Shapiro is a prominent theorist of postmodern and post-nationalist politics, he is completely overlooked.

[33] Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland, p.1, p.9.

[34] Ibid., p.15. Paul Ricoeur, 'Universality and the Power of Difference', States of Mind: Dialogue with Contemporary Thinkers on the European Mind, ed., Richard Kearney, (Manchester: University Press, 1995), p.36.

[35] Ibid., p.57.

[36] Ibid., p.61.

[37] Ibid., p.63. Jean-François Lyotard, 'What Is Postmodernism?', Postmodernism: A Reader, (London: Harvester, 1993), ed., Thomas Docherty, p.46.

[38] Cf. Howard Williams, 'International Relations and the Reconstruction of Political Theory', International Relations and the Limits of Political Theory, (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp.152-3. Cf. James Rosenau, Turbulence in World Politics, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[39] Kearney, Postnationalist Ireland, p.94.

[40] Ibid., p.123, p.141.

[41] Graham, 'Post-Nationalism/ Post-Colonialism: Reading Irish Culture', p.37, p.36.

[42] Ibid., p.36.

[43] Ibid., p.37.

CHAPTER SIX

NOMADIC SUBJECTS: SARA BERKELEY'S <u>FACTS ABOUT WATER</u>

> I lose my sense of self,
> of home, and how the land lies

Sara Berkeley, <u>Facts About Water</u>, (1994).[1]

This chapter will explore how Berkeley's representation of fluid spaces and unfixed subjectivities affects the poetic voice, identity and communication. Sara Berkeley has left Ireland for the Western states of the USA and her writing mentions Dublin place names but also Utah and San Francisco. Asking what kinds of territories are charted in Berkeley's poems, the chapter assesses how far her poetic landscapes move away from the Emerald Isle. Addressing the issue of Irish identity, Berkeley comments:

> I've never been comfortable with the label "poet", never mind "Irish" or "woman", so if I feel myself to have any identity, it's as a writer who writes. That's innocuous enough. I like to mention Dublin placenames in the poems, but I also love Utah, San Francisco, and the deserts of the western states, and I mention these names too. Geographically, that makes me, I suppose, the Irish Emigrant Who Writes. I hope I will always be able to write about Ireland, but the longer I'm away, the more I wonder how wise that is. I can't imagine that anyone reading my work would know me at once for an Irish writer.[2]

Bearing in mind this statement, this chapter notices how Berkeley's poetry both connects with and moves away from the concerns of other Irish female poets. Focusing on <u>Facts About Water</u> (1994) the chapter explores Berkeley's problematic conception of fluid identity and the nomadic, and suggests what are the effects of this for contemporary Irish poetry, feminist and post-colonial debate. Unfortunately, this chapter cannot focus on numerous other poems also representative of Berkeley's concern with deterritorialization which can only be

mentioned in passing, and so chooses to discuss in detail the following: 'Facts About Water', 'Poles' and 'Sea-borne'. These poems have been prioritized since they are typical of the way in which Berkeley uses geographical metaphors in a non-specific fashion.[3]

The project of finding a fertile displacement is common to both feminist and post-colonial thinkers alike as they attempt to address the centre from the periphery, while calling into question this very division of territory and power. Although Edward Said's exile is different from Sara Berkeley's self-imposed emigration, his comments in 'The Mind in Winter: Reflection of Life in Exile' (1984) are relevant:

> ... in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience.[4]

Said talks of a politics that attempts to transcend deep ideological allegiances; boundaries imposed by our home, class, nation, gender and race that lead to the Manichean valorization of one side over another. 'Secular Criticism' imagines homelessness as a space for 'utopian potentiality'.[5] For Said, the importance of post-colonial criticism lies in theorizing crossing borders, whereby alterity is encountered and barriers of thought are transgressed.

In view of Said, this chapter explores the aesthetic, political and ethical dimensions of defamiliarization and displacement in Berkeley's poetry. It notices how Berkeley's poetry attempts to cross borders and places her poetic subjects in unhomely terrain. As she examines the autonomy of representation and identity, the chapter discusses how far Berkeley's poetry can be viewed in terms of Levinasian ethical debate. Arguing that her poetry presents readers with fragmentary understanding, and represents the subject of consciousness as

ungrounded and unheimlich, the chapter asks how this results in the forging of an ethical relationship with 'the other' or with alterity. The thrust of the argument is that Berkeley's poetry redefines what we take to be political and that such a redefinition involves rethinking the political from the point of view of the ethical.

The first part, entitled 'At the Borders of Aesthetics, Politics and Ethics', questions what constitutes a committed 'political' poetry, using essays by Tom Paulin and Theodor Adorno. This leads to an exploration of the relationship between politics and ethics by drawing on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas in order to suggest that Berkeley's aesthetics can be read in terms of an ethical politics. The second part, 'Facing the Flood: A Leaky Ethics', discusses 'Facts About Water' (1994) alongside Luce Irigaray's Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche (1991) in order to investigate a transgressive and anti-foundational approach to subjectivity, that can be related back to the ethics of Levinas and the post-colonial theorization of exile by Said. The third part is called 'Writing As Excess' and explores Berkeley's poems in terms of communication and alterity which is developed in the section entitled 'Opening The Floodgates'. The final part, 'Disequilibrium, Disorientation and Diaspora', reads Berkeley's work in terms of theorization of migration in the work of Rosi Braidotti, Hélène Cixous and Trinh T.- Minh-ha. In this way, the chapter situates Berkeley's poetry in relation to the feminist, post-colonial and post-nationalist debate outlined in this thesis as a whole. Reading Berkeley's representation of identity, the chapter problematizes the relationship between aesthetics and the political, ethics and politics, the relationship between subjectivities, the relationship between subjects and communication, and the relation between poetry and philosophy.

At the Borders of Aesthetics, Politics and Ethics

The role of aesthetics is often mistakenly divorced from the political and there is

a tension within Ireland between poets writing 'political poetry' and those who

are judged to be less politically engaged. In interview, Tom Paulin has accused

Medbh McGuckian's poetry of being 'apolitical'.[6] However, as was argued in

Chapter Four, McGuckian's poetry is not divorced from politics, rather, her

politics are thought in terms that are less empiricist than those of Paulin in his

essays. In labelling McGuckian apolitical, Paulin's version of what constitutes

the political is limiting and he ignores the way in which poetry can inflect

political concerns in terms of ethical questions. Early poetry by Paulin, such as

poems from A State of Justice (1977), can be connected with Muldoon's satire of

the political poet in 'Lunch With Pancho Villa' (1977). Muldoon's speaker asks

the Irish poet why he chooses to write about 'stars and horses, pigs and tress'

when '[p]eople are getting themselves killed/ Left, right and centre/ while you do

what? Write rondeaux?' He is advised: 'You want to get down to something

true/ Something a little nearer home'. Here, Muldoon satirizes the crude Marxist

stance whereby the politically engaged poet is like a 'pamphleteer' whose poetry

stays close to home and contains a strong political message.[7] In Muldoon's

poem, it is as if 'politics' as we know them have been exhausted which is why it

is therefore appropriate for poets to rethink the political from the point of view of

ethical questions.

Paulin's position in Writing to the Moment (1996) where he discusses

'Political Verse' is less reductive. Here, Paulin notices a tension between

thinking of the political in terms of commitment, as opposed to a 'liberal belief'

in the 'separation of the public and private life'.[8] He acknowledges that

> ... the poet who chooses to write about political reality is no different from the poet who chooses love, landscape or a painting by Cézanne as the subject for a poem. The choice of a political subject entails no necessary or complete commitment to an ideology -[9]

For Paulin in this essay, the political poem is motivated by aesthetic ideals and not initiated by allegiances to any particular party line; the importance of the poem lies in how it embodies 'a general historical awareness' which was explored in Chapter Two:

> Although the imagination can be strengthened rather than distorted by ideology, my definition of a political poem does not assume that such poems necessarily make an ideological statement. Instead they can embody a general historical awareness – an observation of the rain – rather than offering a specific attitude to state affairs.[10]

Here, Paulin moves from the affairs of the nation state to suggest that the political poem need not contain a prescriptive message, it can just as easily be an observation and its historicity lies in the way in which it becomes a record of a particular moment of writing. As a record of a personal or public moment, the aesthetic space holds within it the possibility of being political. This is a more subtle definition of politics than can usually be expected from Paulin and it is comparable with the position of Theodor Adorno.

Adorno's essay on 'Commitment' (1965) argues that

> A work of art that is committed strips the magic from a work of art that is content to be a fetish, an idle pastime for those who would like to sleep through the deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political.[11]

For Adorno, there is no refuge for aesthetics from politics since even the 'apoliticism' of certain works of art is deeply political. As with Paulin's argument: 'Committed art in the proper sense is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts of practical institutions ... but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes'.[12] Adorno concludes:

> In Germany, commitment often means bleating what everyone is already saying
> or at least secretly wants to hear. The notion of a 'message' in art, even when
> politically radical, already contains an accommodation to the world: the stance
> of the lecturer conceals a clandestine entente with the listener, who could only
> be rescued from deception by refusing it.[13]

If political poetry need not contain a committed 'message' then what exactly

constitutes a political poem?

Adorno's statement suggests that committed poems critique received

ideological messages. In Muldoon's 'Lunch with Pancho Villa' (1977) the

'political' speaker assumes that committed art must be referential and that it must

represent 'us'. Yet for Adorno, committed art wordlessly critiques referentiality

rather than communicating a received message: 'it is to works of art that has

fallen the burden of wordlessly asserting what is banned to politics'.[14]

Committed art communicates a message that is other to that of the dominant

ideology; it is unaccommodating rather than accommodating to the world.

Underlying this problematic notion of the agent 'wordlessly asserting what is

banned to politics' is the idea of art as defamiliarization whereby political

commitment happens in estranging art forms that bear the burden of a silence. It

is therefore not surprising when Adorno draws on the avant-garde work of Paul

Klee as an example of a type of art that is committed not to the comfortable

political messages that the world wants to hear. Although differences lie

between them as Adorno's more nuanced discussion of commitment goes beyond

Paulin's understanding of the political in relation to the lyric poem, it is possible

to see connections between the views of Adorno and Paulin as they both draw on

Klee.

Paulin would seem just as strange a match for Berkeley if his poetry is judged

in terms of the 'political poetry' with which he started his career. However, as

suggested in Chapter Two, Paulin's Walking a Line (1994) moves away from

what can be crudely understood as 'political' or 'committed' poetry, in favour of

a more complex understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and

politics, and this is facilitated by his use of Paul Klee. Walking A Line moves

into the realm of avant-garde art with the effect of charting a different

relationship between poetry and politics. Paulin's first poem in this collection,

entitled 'Klee/ Clover', reveals the artist creating a beautiful garden in the middle

of an airfield during the war and painting pictures from the canvas of crashed

airplanes. Klee is presented as an artist/ soldier who is both part of and apart

from the terrors of World War One. Paradoxically, his art takes flight from the

war on canvases that have been flown by German fighter pilots. For Adorno, the

ethical function of the work of art is to critique an unjust world. In this way,

Klee's creation of beauty out of the carnage of war fits the bill of envisioning

something beyond the injustices of the failed politics of war and the failing

ideologies of the nation-state. Adorno describes committed artists pointing to 'a

practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life'.[15]

In Adorno's analysis, the role of the aesthetic space becomes utopian and

visionary, as it relies less on transmitting a convenient political message, and

more on an antagonistic and defamiliarizing relationship to the dominant politics

on the ground. Discussing Berkeley's poetry I will leave crude understandings

of a 'committed politics' connected with the concerns of the nation-state, in

favour of an exploration of her ethical relationship with alterity which will be

shown to constitute Berkeley's aesthetics. In order to move from an

understanding of political poetry as committed to the politics on the ground, to

the realization that political poetry should be informed as much by an ethical

relationship with alterity, it is necessary to draw on the work of Emmanuel

Levinas.

Séan Hand notices how for Levinas,

> [t]he tensions between identity and assimilation in a modern state whose
> monotheistic politics are those of a chosen and persecuted people is to be
> transcended ultimately by the original responsibility beyond any universalism,
> an ethically necessary politics that will mark the end of such concepts as
> assimilation and identity, together with the possibility of totalitarianism which
> they to some degree indicate and preserve.[16]

Hand argues that the politics of the modern nation-state are based upon

assimilating alterity into totality or turning 'the other' into the same. This is

identified by Hand as an unethical politics and system of knowledge that denies

the way in which subjectivity is constituted by an openness to the other. In

'Ethics as First Philosophy' (1984), Levinas argues that the containment and

mastery of alterity is an impossibility upon which modern knowledge is based,

and he connects this with sovereignty:

> Modernity will subsequently be distinguished by the attempt to develop from the
> identification and appropriation of being by knowledge toward the identification
> of being and knowledge ... Identical and non-identical are identified. The
> labour of thought wins out over the otherness of things and men.[17]

Modern knowledge or the episteme of Western philosophy holds within it a

'correlation between being and knowledge'. Such a knowledge relies on an

'identification and appropriation' that 'wins out over the otherness of things and

men' with the effect of overcoming difference.[18] Such a knowledge seizes

something and makes it one's own: 'reducing presence and representing the

difference of being, an activity which *appropriates* and *grasps* the otherness of

the known'. To explain this further, Levinas uses the German word 'auffassen',

meaning 'understanding' but also 'fassen', gripping or fastening. Hence,

'knowledge is a re-presentation, a return to presence, and nothing may remain *other* to it'.[19]

Such knowledge is attacked by the post-colonial thinker, Said, and the feminist thinker, Irigaray, as they notice the ways in which the ideologies of imperialism and patriarchy attempt to 'auffassen' colonial subjects and women. In this way, post-colonial and feminist theorization pays attention to an ethical concern for 'the other' that is often left out of modern politics. As we have seen, the politics of the nation-state relies on appropriating otherness and eradicating difference as it hopes to represent 'the people' as a return to presence where nothing may remain other to it. It is in this way that Levinas can identify a tension between subjectivity and the assimilation of identity into a nationality, whereby modern identity politics relies on universalism, turning the other into the same and eradicating difference. In place of the sovereign politics of the subject of the modern-nation state around which modern philosophical thinking of identity has been based, he inserts the question of an ethical and differential relation to alterity. Levinas's philosophy represents a critique of the self-presentation, autonomy and knowledge that constitutes the Cartesian cogito.[20]

In place of an 'intentional consciousness' that limits the world by thinking in relation to itself, Levinas posits the 'non-intentional consciousness' or 'non-reflective consciousness' that does not know itself; it is 'pre-reflective' and 'effaces presence'.[21] Levinas's philosophy has large implications for the theorization of identity politics since he suggests, as has Homi Bhabha coming after him, that the subject is infiltrated by alterity and that essentialist versions of identity do not hold. As Hand notices, for Levinas, it is communication itself that brings about such a situation as 'speech situates the self in relation to the

other in a way that shows us how being for the other is the first fact of existence'.[22] 'Whereas ontology ultimately must reduce saying to the totalizing enclosure of the said, saying is a state of openness to the other ... Subjectivity is the dis-interested vulnerability of saying'.[23] Levinas argues against the ontology and phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, to suggest that language or 'saying' is a process whereby subjectivity is constituted by alterity.[24] The ontology of the subject and her/his epistemological autonomy is shown to be suspect, and for Levinas, the subject is a being-for-the other rather than being-in or for-itself. Rather than the subject mastering alterity, s/he is engaged in communication or communion with 'the other'.

Language is viewed as a mediation with alterity which makes the subject's experience unheimlich. For Levinas, the 'non-intentional consciousness'

> ... has no name, no situation, no status. It has a presence afraid of presence, afraid of the insistence of the identical ego, stripped of all qualities. It is the non-intentionality, not yet at the stage of willing, and prior to any fault, in its non-intentional identification, identity recoils before its affirmation. It dreads the insistence in the return to the self that is a necessary part of identification. This creates the reserve of the stranger or 'sojourer on earth', as it says in the Psalms, the countryless or 'homeless' person who dare not enter in.[25]

Hence, 'one comes not into the world but into question' which is expressed in 'the fear of occupying someone else's place with the Da of my Dasein; it's the inability to occupy a place'.[26] Here we get to an ethics that questions the foundations of 'the identical ego', the home of the person and the intentionality of subjectivity. The following argument in relation to the poetry of Sara Berkeley is that her poems call into question the intentionality of subjectivity and the positioning of identity, with the effect of writing a nomadic, countryless and homeless text. Such an inscription is comparable with the ethical politics of Said's 'Reflection of Life in Exile' (1984); the following argument notices how

far the politics of post-colonial and feminist theorization of subjectivity are

indebted to Levinas's ethical philosophies regarding ontology.[27] In this way, the

chapter offers a reading of Sara Berkeley that challenges the boundaries of

aesthetics, politics and ethics. How far does Berkeley's <u>Facts About Water</u>

question the da of dasein and the sovereignty of subjective knowledge in relation

to alterity?

Facing the Flood: A Leaky Ethics

In her essay 'History Gasps' (1995), the title of which is taken from Berkeley's

poem 'Easter 1944' (1986), Gerardine Meaney touches on the relationship

between anti-foundational modes of subjectivity and alterity. She asks via Julia

Kristeva how far women's time and space are different from the 'historically'

defined proceedings of the Irish literary tradition.[28] Meaney notices how the

protagonist of Berkeley's poem 'The Drowning Element' (1989) is exiled from

history and language to a body that cannot speak itself. She explores the use of

water imagery in Irish women's poetry arguing that Berkeley deals with

femininity in terms of an element that cannot easily be territorialised.[29] Water,

Meaney concludes, offers Berkeley an image of writing that is both extra-

territorial and at home, in her element.[30] Berkeley's early poem 'Out in the

Storm' (p.16) published in 1986, begins her poetic obsession with water. This is

developed in later poems dealing with escape through water and flight such as:

'A Time of Drought',[31] 'Maker of Rain' (p.39), 'The Figures in the Rain' (p.52),

'Man in Balloon' (p.56), 'The Drowning' (p.57) and 'Man in Flight' (p.59).

How far then does water offer an extra-territorial unheimlich home for

Berkeley's nomadic subjects?

The collection <u>Facts About Water</u> is obsessed with drowning, both real and

imaginary.[32] In 'At the Rails' (p.79) the speaker dreams of drowning while in

'The Waking' (p.80), she is '[o]pened from a dream' and asks a question that

haunts the collection as a whole: 'I am surfacing but how should I speak?' In

'Facts About Water' sexuality is represented in terms of an engulfment, fall or a

drowning that does not happen. At a metaphorical level, the poem explores the

act of surfacing with the imagery of a flood into which a woman awaits her fall

only to find that it does not come. Instead, a man falls at her feet and washes

away the fear with 'care' and 'facts about water' so that when she is lost at sea

she can float and find her way back to dry land. Beginning with imagery

evocative of feminine flood or menstruation whereby the young woman gathers

her skirts as she is warned of what is to come when she sexually comes of age,

the imagery is also apocalyptic and biblical, and comparable with the story of

Noah and God's covenant that he will never again flood Earth:

> Be ready for the flood, they said.
> I gathered my skirts. No flood came.
> Beware of the danger that comes with man
> they said. I waited for the fall. (pp.60-62)

Associated with the possibility of drowning is the possibility of suffocation as

if alterity can engulf the subject of consciousness. For example, the man folds

and wraps the woman like an Egyptian mummy which may suggest a suffocating

relationship. As Zygmunt Bauman notices in his discussion of 'The Moral Party

of Two' (1993): 'There is but a thin line between care and oppression'.[33]

However, in the poem, instead of taking her over, the woman says the man 'gave

me to myself' which suggests that he does not dominate her or try to turn the

other into the same. She says: 'he treated me with care' yet he has 'little love': 'He gave me to myself, said without saying/ love if you will, but be warned,/ I have very little'. An ambivalence is enacted semantically as the lines could be uttered by either subject. For instance, the woman could say: 'He gave me to myself' which is 'said without saying' and then, addressing the man: 'love if you will ...' Alternatively, the woman could say: 'He gave me to myself' and he 'said without saying': 'love if you will'.

In Postmodern Ethics (1993) Zygmunt Bauman reads Levinas's philosophy of being-for-the-other to argue that 'the cure for love's aporia is non-love'.[34] Bauman draws on Max Frisch to argue that a love that refuses to allow 'the other' to remain ungraspable is a love that dies. That is, a love that tries to 'auffassen' 'the other' or delimit alterity, risks disallowing the autonomy of 'the other' or turning her/him into the same. To avoid the 'curiosity' or 'hope of knowledge' that kills love, 'love needs only to retreat'.[35] Paradoxically, in order to love, one must not love; love is based on a fixation that cannot be fixed: 'Love is, therefore, insecurity incarnate'.[36] Hence, in the poem, the relationship between the couple moves between security and lack of it, the foundational and the anti-foundational, intimacy and estrangement, and proximity and distance. As Bauman's argues:

> Love cannot really fulfill itself without fixation. Short of fixation, it remains unsure of itself, unsatiated, fearful, restless. It is that restlessness that makes love – only it would not really be love if it admitted it with no resistance.[37]

It is poignant then, that in 'Facts About Water' love for an-other should be associated with uncertainty, restlessness, nomadicity and uncontrol: 'It seems that love cannot survive the attempts to cure its aporia; that it can last, as love,

only together with its ambivalence. With love as with life itself, it is the same

story again: only death is unambiguous ...'[38]

It is therefore appropriate that what characterizes the male figure (in love?) is

his lack of stable ground: 'a man without the anchor [even] of dreams'. With no

dreams, the man implicitly has no imagination about the future and no memory

of the past:

> He blinked in the sun, he hardly seemed
> at home in his own set of bones.
> I felt his uncontrol
> reined in with a shaky hand.

The man is unheimlich in his own skeleton and he is out of control as his body

shakes which may have sexual connotations that connect with 'love's quavering

note' from 'Heartbreak Hour' (p.81). The house of the woman also shakes as

'[t]rains run beneath' it. The home of the body and the home of the house are

both unsteady, and as the couple living out their uncertainty travel through

Berkeley's poetic landscape, they are rootless, homeless and nameless. The

poetic lines enact this lack of foundation as they are built on negatives, whereby

the speaker sets up expectations only to undermine them, as in the first stanza

with the flood that never comes.

In order to create some foundation or anchor, the woman provides a delimited

space for the man and so conjures a 'green field'. This could be connected with

representation of Ireland as four green fields and with stereotypes of Ireland as a

pastoral landscape where there are also 'dry stone walls'. Yet unlike Seamus

Heaney's early poetry that often digs for an authentically Irish landscape, there is

nothing specifically Irish about Berkeley's poetic territory.[39] The woman creates

a blank green place in which to house the man and this is a place bearing no

specific location or name. The poetic subjects are given identity in the poem less

in terms of space and more in terms of narrative or time. The poem undermines the notion that identity is given to the subject by space and place, as the poetic 'I' is identified only in relation to narratives it can tell and in her/his communicative relation to other subjects. It is not the nation-state that gives the poetic subject identity and autonomy but her narrative relation to 'the other'.

What is troubling about the space created within the poem is that is has 'no way in or out' which suggests an enclosed space. As language offers the possibility of narrative, naming or identity, it situates the subject in relation to alterity but also encloses it. As in Levinas, language exposes the subject to alterity; yet it also provides the ability to name and enclose the subject within a fictive space of knowledge or belonging. Like the walled green field conjured within the poem, language has no real exit. In 'The Servant and her Master' (1966) Levinas asks of language: 'Is it possible to get out of this circle otherwise than by expressing the impossibility of getting out of it, by expressing the inexpressible? Is not poetry, of itself, the Exit?'[40] He also asks:

> Is an exit possible or on the contrary is even the light that seems to illuminate this abode artificial, and does our consciousness of the situation become lost in the same interminable game played by language without leading to any cogito? Poetic language will break through the wall whilst preserving itself against the rubble from that very breakthrough, which threatens to bury and immobilize its advance ...[41]

In 'Facts About Water' the space conjured by the woman for the man is comparable with the enclosed yet open space of poetic language, as it negotiates with the foundational and anti-foundational, the facts and the water, identity and alterity, and fixity and unfixity.

In the poem free space is defined by unfree space, and the man's field can only be virgin territory if four walls are built around it to hold the man in and hold him together. This is a poignant metaphor for the problematic notion of free

territory. In order to steady the man his space must be positioned outside of the social, segregated or walled off from the rest of the world, remaining unpopulated except for himself. In this imagined space of security which is like a prison, boundaries must be built against alterity in order for the man to be held together, so as to 'steady' him and stop his shaking, and to create a home or port for an unhomely subject who is anchorless. The green field constitutes a solitary withdrawal within an enclosed space which is comparable with the end of 'Heartbreak Hour' (p.81) when the speaker leaves her lover and faces 'the solid grey door/ and my own walls, my silences'. Singularity is associated with silence, whereas togetherness is imagined in terms of the possibility of openings or communication. The man's enclosure is also presented in terms of a different interiority as it connects with the erotic connotations of the woman holding the man in or taking the other into herself. The female figure offers the man a secure womb-like space and he is like a child who, if he needs her in the night, can call out. However, attempts to delimit the subject's space so as to find an anchor to stop his unheimlich shaking, takes him closer to the fluidity or alterity that threatens him; that is, rather than finding a foundation against the flood which seems to haunt both of the figures in the poem.

For instance, in return for the field he gives the woman words and brings her to his shore which is a boundary space, a transient and ever-shifting territory between land and sea. Biblical imagery from the first stanza is continued when like Christ, he writes in the sand. The writing in the sand is dissolved by water, suggesting the dissolution of language and, by implication, identity. However, the man in Berkeley's poem chooses to write 'facts about water', and he composes a list of nautical and technical terms of measurement that would

attempt to contain and control the flood promised in the first stanza. But water

threatens land as it dissolves beneath the tide. As in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's

poem 'Quicksand' (1986), Medbh McGuckian's 'On Ballycastle Beach' (1988)

and Eavan Boland's 'Anna Liffey' (1995), water can be feared for its depths and

ability to drown, and can be associated with an 'oceanic feeling', representing the

unconscious seas into which we may all be cast adrift.[42] In critical

psychoanalysis, the vastness of the ocean is where we find our being and is

associated with the womb or the place from which we have all evolved. By way

of avoiding being castaway into such an alterity, the man writes a list of terms

and tools that enable the sailor to navigate dangerous waters. Whereas the

woman gives the man an imaginative space that provides him with stable ground,

he gives her facts, words that denote things and the ability to 'return' to 'dry

land'.

The words he writes in the sand are associated with a technical world that has

traditionally been used by men of science. His diction is binding and confining

as his language pays attention to measuring units of water. As the man writes we

find land and sea become mapped, measured and confined into the small units of

nautical navigation and cartography by technical tools such as the 'sextant,

compass, dipstick, dial,/ plumb, octant, nautical mile'. The alliteration, rhythms

and rhyme of the poem become more measured, tight and rigid as the flood or the

water is controlled. The man attempts to become master of the flood but in view

of his shaky hand it is unclear whether he manages to gain control as writer or

sailor. Bearing in mind the image of him falling at the woman's feet in the first

stanza and the way in which she tells him, as she would a child, to call out in the

night should he need her, it appears the man is less masterful than his language

would suggest. This also undermines the tacit idea within feminism that control of words allows us control of the world. Berkeley's poem does not imply her control over objects, and the notion that men have access to mastery through language is shown to be incorrect since in her poem language has little to do with the containable and, like love, it has everything to do with loss of control in the face of alterity.

The woman's diction also reflects a cartographic insistence on measuring as she conjures a mile of green grass. In the final stanza the woman adopts the man's terms of navigation as she awakes at sea and dreams her way back to land with language such as the man wrote for her: 'Acre, arpent, section, square,/ League, light-year, township, air'. As she mimics his writing and speech rhythms the question arises whether she is master or mistress of the flood. However, her words become less and less specific as she imagines a 'light-year', and ends the poem appropriately with the word 'air'. Questioning whether the writing in the sand can hold, since although the woman attempts to return to dry land her diction takes to the air, Berkeley's poem enacts a tension between foundational and anti-foundational modes of writing; the temptation of facts and the dissolution of them.

'Facts About Water' contemplates the potential for flood or the immensity of water and air both of which are usually imagined as infinite elements bearing the mark of limitlessness. Berkeley's other poems move between desert and sea; these are landscapes that provoke philosophies of excess, the sublime, the unamenable to representation and disappearing horizons. The poem describes a relationship between male and female figures, whereby the man attempts to gain control by mastering and inscribing the oceanic. The woman mimics his

inscription or writing in the sand but towards the end of the poem her words become less grounded, accurate and substantial.

Echoing Levinasian concerns such as the relationship between being and alterity, being and language, and being and knowledge, which were identified in the first part of this chapter, 'Facts About Water' bears an uncanny resemblance to issues raised by Luce Irigaray in <u>Marine Lover of Friedrich Neitzsche</u> (1991). In making this connection I cannot claim that Irigaray has influenced Berkeley; neither do I claim that Levinas has influenced Berkeley since she has not mentioned reading his work. Instead, I am interested in the way in which their writing informs readings of Berkeley's representation of identity, autonomy and knowledge in relation to the politics of the nation-state. In <u>Marine Lover</u> Irigaray sets up a dichotomy whereby there are two modes of thinking: that which relies on delimitation, knowledge and navigation, and that which is associated with limitlessness, alterity and disorientation. Irigaray genders these two philosophies suggesting that the former can be associated with the male figure whom she addresses in her text and the latter is evocative of the female speaker who narrates. What is important is the way in which the former mode of understanding (or auffassen) is shown not to hold or grasp in the way in which it aims to do. As in 'Facts About Water', attempts at control or sovereignty on dry land are threatened by leakiness.

Irigaray's argument is centred around the need to allow love for the other or an ethical relation to alterity to grow. She begins 'Baptism of the Shadow' with what can be assumed to be the 'marine lover' addressing Nietzsche, and approaches his philosophy not in a wholly oppositional way, but as one might a negligent lover:

> And, certainly, the most arduous thing has been to seal my lips, out of love. To close off this mouth that always sought to flow free.
> But, had I never held back, never would you have remembered that something exists which has a language other than your own. That, from her prison, someone was calling out to return to the air. That your words reasoned all the better because within them a voice was captive. Amplifying your speech with an endless resonance.[43]

The woman's voice is associated with otherness, fluidity and flight. She addresses Nietzsche, outlining the shortcomings of Western philosophy: 'your horizon has limits. Holes even ... Your world will unravel. It will flood out to other places. To that outside you have not wanted'. The male figure is represented as autistic and in need of an enclosed, delimited and inner space:

> Your calculations and half-measures and half-shades make everything into little enclosures ... My whole body is divided up into neatly ruled sections (p.4) ... 'I do not wish to be measured out drop by drop. Drop by drop (I) do not care to live my time. For whole and entire (I) want myself at every instant. (p.21)

As he tries to measure time and space, the man seeks to measure out the sea which is associated with the marine lover's body. However, the facts about water do not hold. Irigaray implores the male figure to '[f]orget the knife-cuts, the chalk-line partitions. Forget the appropriations at frontiers that belong to no one and are marked by arbitrarily solid lines that risk the abyss at every moment' (p.21).

Like the man who is offered a foundational frontiered home in 'Facts About Water' and tries to control the flood, his hopes of 'solid lines' against the 'risk [of] the abyss' are ineffectual: 'You are now immersed and re-enveloped in something that erases all boundaries. Carried away by the waves. Drowning in the flood. Tragic castaway in unrestrained turmoil' (p.36). If the man trusts the 'incorruptible sea' he will experience 'endless rapture' since he has 'already dwelt in the sea' which is a place from which we have all evolved from sea

creatures and is associated with our pre-conscious state in the womb. The marine

lover asks: 'Isn't streaming into the sea a return to the same? Isn't it going back

to the spring from whence you have sprung?' (p.37): ' ... the man has still to

come who will live that love out beyond the reach of any port. Letting go of his

rock, his ship, his island, and even of that last drop of oil on the water, and all so

that he can feel the intoxication of such vastness' (p.47). However, for Irigaray,

mariners 'just keep moving on, in search of something that offers a solid

resistance and opposition to their wandering. That offers a rampart to bear back

their thought' (p.48). She suggests a nomadic venturing forth: 'go beyond, walk

further, and break up those certainties with a hammer' (p.53).

The feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti has discussed images of the void in

female writing and a 'nomadic style of thinking' that, like the 'tightrope walker',

seeks 'after a precarious balance' between being possessed and dispossessed by

the master text of his-story. Comparably, Berkeley has written a poem entitled

'The Tightrope Walker' and various others try to take lines of flight into the air

(p.74). Braidotti notices, in the manner of Irigaray how, what she identifies as

masculine oriented philosophy, (and here she mentions Cartesian thought), is

comparable with the cartographic mission to establish the frontiers of a kingdom

of reason by defining its limits: 'The subject is bound to delimit space, to

enclose it with a wall, inside which his/her system of scientific order might be set

up'.[44] This is precisely what the woman speaker in the poem attempts to do for

the male figure. This is a statement about cartographic demarcation that can be

connected with imperialism as it draws up national spaces and indicates how

both genders are drawn to marking out systems of order, yet how both masculine

and feminine subjectivities remain disorientated or unheimlich. In response to

this tension between two differing philosophies, Braidotti votes for un-Cartesian routes or lines of flight rather than metaphors of grounding, rootedness and demarcation. This is a move via Gilles Deleuze towards nomadic displacement rather than relying on more foundational modes of understanding.[45]

In spite of the anti-foundational aspects of <u>Marine Lover</u>, feminists such as Nelly Richard are suspicious regarding Deleuzian notions of deterritorialization.[46] Richard and the post-colonial critic, Simon During, worry that moves towards anti-essentialist and anti-foundational models of understanding, run the risk of taking away the ground from which feminist and post-colonial identities may come into being.[47] In Braidotti's <u>Nomadic Subjects</u> there is a similar tension between feminist, post-colonial and postmodern approaches to identity. However, if feminist and post-colonial identities have yet to come into being, the crisis of modernity whereby the autonomy and sovereignty of the subject is questioned, is fundamentally a male and Western crisis. Far from destroying agency, the fragmented subject forces us to recognize a plurality of possibilities. Moreover, the volatility of subject positions need not preclude a group of people taking a stand at any given strategic moment, nor from forming coalitions of like interest.[48] Yet the worry remains that a feminine language risks the void, as in Berkeley's poem, it ends with thin air which can be read as coming to nothing or as liberating.

However, as noticed in discussion of Boland, between the lines is a leaking excess rather than absence. Like Levinas, Irigaray acknowledges that strategies of displacement defy the world of compartmentalization and the systems of dependence it engenders, while filling the space of creation with a passion named wonder: '*Who or what the other is, I never know*'.[49] Setting up a philosophical

ethics that pays attention to radical alterity Irigaray avoids gendering this as 'feminine truth':

> She does not set herself up as *one*, as a (single) female unit. She is not closed up or around one single truth or essence. The essence of a truth remains foreign to her. She neither has nor is a being. And she does not oppose feminine truth to masculine truth. Because this would amount to playing the – man's – game of castration. If the female sex takes place by embracing itself, by endlessly sharing and exchanging its lips, its edges, its borders, and their "content", as it becomes other, no stability of essence is proper to her. (p.86)

The ethical project for the female writer is to bring into being an unruly feminine excess that displaces the (gender) binary altogether.[50] That is, an unruly dispositioning that, although related by Irigaray to the feminine, can be deployed by both sexes and is not gender specific or only 'proper to her'.

Writing As Excess

In her poem 'The Girl Who Went To Live On A Wall' (1989) the poetic speaker alludes to an excess that is connected with alterity:

> ... I need only your eyes
> To see to the writing of these difficult words
> Feelings trapped between the
> Lines, speared on the i's and fluttering.[51]

The title of the poem states how the speaker is situated on a precarious threshold or at a boundary point between two spaces, and she is evocative of Humpty Dumpty which begs the question whether the girl on the wall is about to have the great fall that is imagined at the beginning of 'Facts About Water'. Both the girl and Humpty are ovular and both live in a world where ordinary language can easily turn into nonsense; in Berkeley's poem feelings are associated with the nonsensical and are trapped within the sense of language. The lines allude to that which is unamenable to representation in a way that is comparable with Tom

Paulin's poems 'Almost There' and 'That's It' from <u>Walking A Line</u> (1994),

while the poem is haunted by the délire that was discussed in relation to my

reading of Jean-Jacques Lecercle.[52] The girl in the poem can easily fall off the

wall, off the line and into the delirium offered by 'these difficult words' which

provide an uncertain entry into both sense and nonsense - but she does not fall.

Sitting on a wall or fence is evocative of situating oneself between two sides in

a position of presumed neutrality yet even this third space is not neutral or

outside of representation. As she sits on the wall, the speaker is still 'trapped

between the lines'. The poem alludes to problems with communication in two

ways: first, in terms of the limits of representation, and second, in terms of a

problematic relationship between Self and 'other'. There is a tension between

the 'I' and 'your eyes' as she creates a division between the person who reads

and the poetic subject. Speared by subjectivity or 'speared on the i's', the way

one sees and is seen by others is presented as painful. The poetic speaker is

pinned down by her words that flutter like a trapped bird attempting release. The

poem suggests that communication cannot communicate since there is a glitch

between the poetic self and language, and the poetic self who speaks and 'the

other' who 'understands' her.

In Medbh McGuckian's 'On Ballycastle Beach' (1988) the poetic speaker

imagines how for the reader: 'My words are traps/ Through which you pick your

way'.[53] However, Berkeley's speaker has less control and appeals to 'you', the

reader or another poetic subject, to recognize her own entrapment and struggle

within language. As the poetry is marked by a difficulty with communication

and the topic of the poem is understanding or writing itself, the poetic speaker

moves towards exceeding herself in a language that provides both the excess and

the limitations. The beyond of language is what she cannot escape from and so she reaches out to 'you' as 'the other' who will grasp this painful excess. This is not a purely aesthetic undertaking since her need for your eyes introduces an ethical dimension whereby the alterity of language reaches out to the alterity of an-other or, in this case, to the alterity of the reader or a particular reader born in mind by the poet. Berkeley's poetry can be understood in terms of versing and conversing: in her call to 'the other' who will see or hear her words, she appeals to a conversation that will initiate an ethical relation with 'the other' since language is not her language but always the language of someone else. Like Levinas, Berkeley notices how language is not a private medium but something public and communitarian, which relies on conversing with one another and versing alterity.

As she hits at the limits of language and communication, Berkeley is as interested in silence as she is in conversation and in this way, she can be understood in relation to my discussion of Boland in the previous chapter. The female figure in 'Reflex' (p.69) refuses to verse or converse. She is not a writer but 'a crafter/ moulding her absence with bare hands,/ dovetailing silences'. Oddly, the female artist joins together absences with silences. She is taken to a 'shelter, / a cardigan of words she would seldom wear;/ the nouns she devoured' 'but the verbs' 'she had no purpose for,/ and cast away'. Berkeley uses words to evoke the female artist's silences and to fill in the gaps or dovetail them together thus creating a structure of words out of an implied absence. Her speaker swallows names and throws away words associated with action. With 'darkness about the mouth', her gap needing to be filled is evocative of the female genitals, while refusing words is associated with insanity. In the poem, the female artist is

a castaway who turns her back on the Symbolic which could fill the semiotic

void. Paradoxically, this is narrated by a poet who holds onto 'the ache of

sanity' by filling the silences left behind by the female artist.

The poem 'Fall' from Facts About Water explores silence further:

> I finger the silence
> That follows a poem's end
> It is the sound
> of having been there, the hard despair
> that follows the pain getting words
> and after the rain you can hear the drops
> staying in the trees. (p.65)

The silence after the words is the sound of having been somewhere yet this after

space is unchartable. The silence afterward is heard in contrast to what came

before as the sound of no sound and words are explored in terms of absence. The

poem could be read by feminists in terms of femininity, silence and lack,

especially in view of the allusion to Emily Dickinson's 'confusion' with which

the poem begins.[54] However, here, I avoid gendering this silence as has Irigaray

whereby women are the excluded ground of the Symbolic.[55] As 'Facts About

Water' demonstrates, both female and male figures are presented in Berkeley's

poetry as being caught within the confines of communication while male poets

such as Paulin also allude to a leaking around the limits of language. Moreover,

as in the poem 'The Girl Who Went To Live On A Wall', the absences at the

edge of the Symbolic are imagined as not so much a womanly lack as an excess.

The silence after words is compared with leakiness or drops hanging for a

moment on a tree after rain before falling. This is enacted in the line breaks

whereby words hang on the edge of silence before falling into the next phrase, as

in the gap between 'sound' and 'of having been there'. Words are associated

with water, fluidity and a moment where they hang in the face of gravity as when

a person jumps, hits the line of gravity and hangs for a moment in mid-air. The poem imagines hearing the drops in the trees but they cannot be heard except in the way that they are marked by a silence before they fall. Like Heaney in his debt to Frost, Berkeley's poetry is concerned with the edges of representation or the 'brim' of language. Berkeley's concern with liminality, flight and fluidity connects her with Paulin whose use of visionary and existentialist landscapes via Paul Klee also dwell on 'a kind of glitch/ in what you're saying'.[56] This 'glitch' is found in Berkeley's poem in the syntax of the line: 'that follows pain getting words'. A more prosaic rendering of this line would be 'that follows the pain of getting words'. Yet the word 'getting' jars to suggest that words are given; getting and begetting them is painful. The poetic voice is presented as not entirely in control and the pain of 'getting words' is evoked by the ungrammatical syntax where the poetic voice flutters or stutters over the line.

Such stuttering is described by Gilles Deleuze in his essay on poetry entitled 'He Stuttered' (1994) where:

> Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in a state of perpetual disequilibrium ... It is no longer the formal or superficial syntax that presides over the equilibrium of language, but a syntax in the process of becoming, a veritable creation of a syntax that gives birth to a foreign language and a grammar of disequilibrium.[57]

This is a poetic language that gasps rather than grasps, and both male and female speakers stutter. Unlike the cartographer who attempts to chart a delimited territory, poetic stutters disturb meaning, throwing the lines out of stride in a 'process of becoming' rather than forging a fixed grammar; giving 'birth to a foreign language' or speaking '*a l'étranger*', they make strange and create a disequilibrium that would throw the bubble of Heaney's spirit level off centre.

Poems in Berkeley's Facts About Water are comparable with Seamus Heaney's

deterritorialization. She writes a number of poems about flight that are

reminiscent of Sweeney Astray (1983) and Station Island, (1984). Her poem

'Man in Flight' could be a direct writing back to Heaney or the Sweeney myth:

'Sometimes he was like/ a powerful bird/ His climb into air' (p.59). As was

noticed in Chapter One, Heaney borrows Robert Frost's notion of writing on the

brim which connects with Berkeley's exploration of limits in terms of fluidity.

Berkeley's poem 'The Swing' from Home Movie Nights (1989) (p.49) is also

comparable with Heaney's poem 'The Swing' from The Spirit Level, (1996),

which begs the question of how far the two writers are in communion or

communication with one another.[58] Whatever is the case, both a male Northern

writer and a female Southern writer employ nomadic metaphors, imagery of

flight and loss at sea in their poetry. Moreover, the comparisons I have made

between Berkeley and Paulin's Walking a Line suggest that concern with the

limits of the Symbolic is not just a feminist issue.

Disequilibrium, Disorientation and Diaspora

Berkeley's poem 'Poles' deals further with disequilibrium and disorientation

whereby the poetic voice oscillates between placement and displacement:

> The mind runs north to south
> the weirs of the river of thought turn round
> the rivers in the heart's valley turn;
>
> heading west
> I lose my sense of self,
> of home, and how the land lies,   (p.66)

For an Irish reader, the first lines might conjure the map of Ireland where northern and southern points are inscribed within the mind as politically charged poles. That the mind runs south could have 'political' connotations for the Irish writer but the poem does not name Ireland; rather, it questions orientation and the ability to map. Moreover, such a 'political' reading of the poem seems forced as the metaphorical map of the poem is not fixed and resists association with an actual landscape as the speaker's 'mind runs' south like the water of a river.

Thought is imagined in terms of a river and within this there are 'weirs' or dams built across the water to regulate its flow. The dams in the river of thought are barriers that hold back the flood and are comparable with the male figure in Irigaray's Marine Lover who sticks to dry hard land and builds dams against the fluidity of alterity. For Irigaray's mariners: 'Extreme polar opposites seem more desirable to them than staying in the middle of the undauntable sea' (p.51). In Berkeley's poem, the speaker oscillates at sea in the middle of the poles, and the dams 'turn round' suggesting fluid movement or flexibility of thought but also confusion.

While stanza two imagines the poetic subject 'heading west', no actual landscape is named, and it is not clear whether the terrain is Ireland, America or somewhere else. A map is being charted here but it is a map in the mind rather than a real country. Loss of direction is associated with loss of reason and by implication loss of self, home and identity: 'I lose my sense of self,/ of home, and how the land lies'. There is play on the word 'lies' since this could refer to the lie of the land or the lies of the land. If the lie of the land is a lie then its demarcations are not to be trusted. The poem depicts an external landscape that is internalized or an internal landscape that is externalized, whereby the inner

boundaries of thought spin out of control due to a strong current of water, while the external demarcations of the terrain are transgressed by a speaker who is lost in transit.

Providing crossings between inner and outer worlds, the poem depicts an existential landscape where the imagery of rivers of thought, territorial, intellectual and emotional barriers, disallows a clear demarcation between poetic self and world. The poem presents the subject lost in space and lost as space. In Bodyspace (1996) Nancy Duncan argues that keeping the environment on the outside is a reflex used by the subject in order to preserve mastery over space and this draws a solid division between subject of consciousness and external landscape.[59] 'Poles' destabilizes how we usually understand subjectivity and space as two separate and self-contained entities with the effect of disrupting the polarity of Cartesian thought by which Enlightenment reasoning operates. Rather than sticking to maps of Ireland or the US, Berkeley's poem charts an *unheimlich* elsewhere where clear divisions between the body and space are undermined.

The image of 'her waters' turning 'to follow the moon' is evocative of a menstrual cycle that is supposed to be lunar or monthly. Whereas the journey from north to south is linear, the turning of 'her waters' is cyclical. The feminine is often associated with the moon and with water as in Boland's 'Anna Liffey' (1995), Irigaray, and Kristeva's theorization of fluidity alluded to by Meaney in 'History Gasps' (1995).[60] However, the waters become frozen and the 'cold lies flat along the ground' can be read as cold lies or untruths or as frost laying. The imagery becomes polar as the landscape presented oscillates between the binaries of 'black and white'. '[B]lack and white from pole to pole', the female figure is

stretched in a middle ground between north and south, black and white, or

between binaries which is rather like the black and white speaker in-between

planets in Boland's 'The Art of Grief'.[61]

The line break between the fourth and final stanzas evokes the sense of falling

into the 'deeper blacks'; a place 'way beyond' 'where space roars' like a river. It

is curious that space should roar when it tends to be associated with silence. Like

the poem 'Fall', 'Poles' imagines a beyond where 'darkness found a voice'.

Darkness is evocative of the pre-rational that evades enlightenment, existing at

the mind's limits or the 'weirs in the river of thought'; a space that is

unmappable since it is neither north or south but somewhere at the edges of

cartographic understanding. The verse has to end at this point since this dark

space cannot be voiced in the poem. We only learn that darkness has found a

voice but not how this comes about. The poem looks to an absence or silence

'[t]hat follows the poem's end'. Once again, the poem can be compared with

Paulin's 'Almost There', published in the same year, where he imagines a

'speechjolt' 'travelling' 'through darkness and moisture'.[62]

The effect of Berkeley's poem is evocative of Gaston Bachelard's The Poetics

of Space (1958) when he asserts that '[t]he being of man [or woman] is an

unsettled being which all expression unsettles'.[63] Here, we can also think back to

the unsettled couple in 'Facts About Water' who, like the subject in 'Poles', take

a diasporic journey that results in a scattered poetic narrative. They desire home

or dry land via words, yet it is from words that their fluid dispersion by sea

originates. Unlike 'Facts About Water', 'Poles' dives into the darkness without

dreaming a boat with which to navigate a line back to the land. Berkeley's

poetry disallows stable boundaries and foundational modes of thought as she

turns to fluidity.

Opening the Floodgates

In <u>Patterns of Dissonance</u> (1991), Rosi Braidotti uses Deleuze to her advantage

as a feminist philosopher and connects with Levinas's ethics when she argues:

'fundamental traits of the patriarchal theoretical system become manifest: its

chronic inability to recognize a state of flow, fluidity, incompleteness,

inconclusiveness, and the relational bond to the other'.[64] As Deleuze and

Guattari argue:

> It is, of course, indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view
> to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity ...
> But it is dangerous to confine oneself to such a subject, which does not function
> without drying up a spring or stopping a flow ... It is thus necessary to conceive
> of a molecular women's politics that slips into molar confrontation, and passes
> under or through them.[65]

Braidotti attacks patriarchal philosophy in ways comparable with Deleuze and

Guattari as they attempt to think otherwize. Like Deleuze and Guattari in

'Rhizome' (1983), she calls for fluid conceptions of identity and

inconclusiveness: 'What is emerging in feminist writing' is 'the concept of a

multiple, shifting and often self-contradictory identity, a subject that is not

divided in, but rather at odds with language'.[66] This is what emerges in

Berkeley's poem but also in the male (as distinct from masculinist) theorists,

Deleuze and Guattari. What the poetry and the theory attacks on both sides of

the gender divide is precisely the dividing and delimited philosophies that have

dominated the Western episteme since the Enlightenment.[67] The challenge then

for poets and theorists is be strangers to themselves - to write '*à l'étranger*'. But

what would it mean, in a political sense, to write or think '*à l'étranger*'?

At the end of The Levinas Reader (1989) in the section on 'Ethics and Politics',

Levinas notices in interview that to think in terms of 'the other' is not always

possible between neighbours and he concedes that defense is a politics that is

ethically necessary. Here, he is thinking particularly of the differences between

Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem.[68] When 'the other' threatens you on a

daily level there comes a point where 'loving thy neighbour' or 'thinking in

terms of the other' is less easy than is suggested by Kristeva. If, at a political

level, to think '*à l'étranger*' is problematic, that does not mean that it is

impossible to write '*à l'étranger*'. It is noticeable that English translations of

Kristeva turn to the French word, '*à l'étranger*', to express the need to

defamiliarize oneself from what is given, while English translations of Cixous's

French stick mostly with the German word to denote the '*unheimlich*'.[69]

Whether words are foreign to readers or not is a matter of idiom. Heaney writes

of 'making strange' and, as Cixous has suggested in Rootprints (1997), there is

something poetic in writing '*à l'étranger*' or defamiliarizing readers by using

words from a different idiom. She draws on the examples of Paul Celan and

Osip Mandlestam, poets of a less referential yet committed form of art, to

suggest that poetry is a 'lost vessel' and that 'writing is beyond us, always going

forward'.[70] Cixous's interviewer, Mireille Calle-Gruber argues that this

constitutes a 'poethics': "Where writing frees itself of a form of 'realism', that is

to say simplistic conventions, to give itself full latitude to think. To become a

'thinking-writing'" (p.79). My question is whether Berkeley's poetry constitutes

Calle-Gruber's definition of 'poethics', to identify what would be a poetry that

writes '*à l'étranger*' and to explore what implications this has for readings of

Irish poetry.

The poem 'Sea-borne' explores opening the floodgates, and develops the

tension between possession and dispossession described in 'Facts About Water'

and 'Poles'. Once again thinking is associated with fluidity as the speaker says:

> I smell sea-salt from my thoughts
> I begin to be obviously
> sea-borne, as you were
> once dragged from the water's womb,
> slimy, sea-green, wreathed in foam,
> wearing the weeds of birth. (p.75)

Water is also connected with feminine tides as the poem moves into womb

imagery where the word 'borne' can be phonetically linked with the birth

imagery in the first stanza. What is interesting is how the word 'borne' can mean

to be carried away or transported yet also to be limited. For example, the noun

'borne' comes from the French meaning marker or boundary, and the verb

'borner' meaning to limit or restrict. The poem imagines the speaker being

'borne' 'as you were' dragged from the water's womb'. The womb is an

enclosed space from which the baby emerges and in this case, s/he emerges

'wreathed' and 'wearing the weeds of birth'. Weeds are plants that cling to the

earth, a wreath is a ring usually associated with death rather than birth, and the

child is 'dragged' with some difficulty from the womb. This imagery does not

suggest an easy or ethereal transportation in the way that the title of the poem

seems to promise. To be 'borne' is to be carried away yet also restricted. To

refer back to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical vocabulary: the subject of

consciousness is limited by molar lines or foundational thought but there are also

lines of flight; one is born/borne both bounded and carried away.

As she claims to open the 'flood-gates' or the 'sea-salt of my thoughts', the imagery echoes that of 'Poles' which imagines rivers of the mind. In the poem, body and mind run together as with the image of embarassment or 'shy red stealing to my skin'. The person is presented in terms of osmosis whereby the limits, 'bornes' or floodgates of the body and mind, are opening and absorbing. The other figure in the poem is imagined as 'sea-green' and to 'let the ocean in' has erotic implications comparable with 'Facts Of Water', where the female figure holds the man in and holds him together. The poem becomes an articulation of desire for 'the other' as the speaker's heart 'is in my mouth' and is voiced within the poem. Yet she is choked by an excess of emotion; her heart clogs her mouth with the effect of threatening the utterance of the poem itself. However, as the ending acknowledges: 'silence is by far the harder cry'. Unable to cry silence, speech enables her to articulate desire for 'the other', and to encounter alterity through language, and in this way the poem opens the floodgates of speech, thought and her body. Desire to connect with alterity that is imagined in terms of an excess of emotion is the drive or current that motivates the poem, and it is in this way that the poetic subject becomes sea-borne. Yet the poem flutters as she is 'borne' both carried away and trapped. This tension between being grounded and in flight relates to the poem 'The Girl Who Went To Live On a Wall', whilst connecting with 'Poles' and 'Facts About Water'. Such a tension also takes us back to my discussion of Heaney in Section One where I explored gravity and levity. Discussion of deterritorialization from sections one and two can be developed further in relation to Berkeley's poetry by theorizing the ethical consequences of her flutters with alterity.

Nomadic Subjects and Border Transgression

In 'Revolution in Poetic Language' (1974), Julia Kristeva has discussed in psychoanalytic terms the way in which the thetic boundary between the Symbolic realm of language and a semiotic unarticulated realm is constantly in danger of being breached by poetic discourse. Just as the semiotic cannot be spoken, poetry cannot disavow the limits of language since this would imply the silence that is acknowledged by Berkeley in 'Fall'. Hence:

> Poetic mimesis maintains thetic unicity by making it undergo a kind of anamnesis, by introducing into the thetic position the stream of semiotic drives making it signify. Mimesis and poetic language therefore do not disavow the thetic, instead they go through its truth (signification, denotation) to tell the 'truth' about it.[71]

In its transgression of grammatical rules, poetic language challenges the Symbolic whilst operating within it. Poetry does not disavow thetic borderlines and leap between the lines, as imagined in 'The Girl Who Went To Live On A Wall', but it does challenge the rationality of language. This is not writing outside of language but on the edges or on its outer skin (p.155). So the limits of representation are not broken but its 'bornes' are paced. Like Boland, when Berkeley claims to open the floodgates she does so in a fairly coherent way; she still writes words since to open the floodgates entirely would lead to semiotic incoherence that would be a muteness, a darkness, and a pre-linguistic silence. Berkeley's poems can only allude to this absence that cannot be written with the effect of challenging the rationale of representation, and this has both political and ethical repercussions.

For example, like Berkeley, Cixous's poethics provide her with a form of expression that encounters rather than delimits alterity. Cixous is not as removed from Irish writing or exile as she may at first appear: she has written on the exile

of James Joyce and has experienced rhizomatic displacement as a French

Algerian with a family tree spanning from Germany, Austria, Hungary and

Slovakia to Oran. As Cixous looks to writing '*à l'étranger*' or being 'abroad at

home', she notices the importance of living or writing the unheimlich which is a

theoretical and poetic project that can be understood in terms of Berkeley's

poetry.[72] For example, in Rootprints (1997), Cixous discusses the undecidable in

relation to writing:

> Why I like the 'undecidable': because it is the other's chance [*la chance de
> l'autre*] ... The thinking that addresses the undecidable is the thinking of
> tolerance, the thinking that does not sever, the thinking capable of concavity, of
> turning in on oneself to make room for difference. (p.83)

Here we can hear the echoes of Levinas's philosophical ethics and the feminist

discourse of Irigaray's Marine Lover (1991).

In her discussion with Cixous, Mirielle Calle-Gruber takes this further:

"Writing as excess; being more than oneself; an encounter with alterity: 'Writing

is beyond us, always going forward'. A place of the future. To write 'is to write

on the periphery, on the edge of one-self'" (p.106). Cixous's own writing style

becomes conspicuously poetic in its syntax as she gathers pace, begging the

question of how far the reason of theory or philosophy necessarily explodes

when confronted with an excess of meaning. Her aim 'is not to lock up meaning,

[but] to give it/oneself over to the chance of linguistic and textual crossing, to

work a non-form' (p.150). In an intricate way, Cixous likens her position as a

cross-border intellectual or emigrant writer to writing on the periphery, or 'on the

edge of oneself'. She imagines the transgressive potential of poetic language as a

process that, in Kristeva's terms, makes small ambushes at the limits of language

with the effect of drawing attention to the ideological borders of representation.

Identification, classification, definition and naming suggest a delimited field of

meaning which in Berkeley's <u>Facts About Water</u> does not hold since

representation opens up rather than closes down space and meaning. Cixous

hopes to tread an 'aerial, detached, uncatchable' (p.4) space that is less grounded,

'going off on a voyage not knowing where' (p.8) in a manner comparable with

Berkeley's nomadic subjects.

Like Berkeley, Cixous, Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari, hope to remap

territories charted by their philosophical masters and to find a fertile

displacement. Cixous challenges the floodgates; the 'weirs of thought' or

knowing, asking:

> Where does the edge overflow? Where does the border con-front? 'The other
> side, who marks my sides, the other is the besides, the beyond. Overstepping.
> Besides-self, besides-world, beside-my-own ... It is so dark where I am
> searching for a language that makes no noise to whisper what is neither living
> nor dead. All words are too loud, too rapid, too sure, I'm searching for the
> names of the shadows *between the words*' (pp.151-52).

One wonders what conversations Cixous and Berkeley's 'Girl Who Went To

Live On A Wall' (1989) would have had.

Gruber explains Cixous's aims further:

> To choose fiction and not theory as a place of intervention is also to prefer the
> terrain of imagination to that of feminist ideology; art to demonstration, emotion
> to abstraction. To look for a language of flesh and of blood which is a language
> of poetry instead of a conceptually, terminologically set language. (p.152)

In this statement Gruber does not see poetry as aesthetically removed or

'abstracted'. Instead she turns this naïve assumption on its head suggesting that

it is 'conceptually, terminologically set language' that is removed and politically

sterile. The 'place of intervention' is a poetic language that inscribes the body

and emotions into existence rather than leaving them behind in an act of

philosophical 'rationality'. In this way, the rationale that philosophy depends

upon is presented as unreasonable since it cuts the human being and the human

body, out of the picture. It is not surprising that Irigaray ends her Marine Lover

hoping to "go beyond" this and to create a union between word and nature,

'logos and cosmos'. Irigaray reads this according to religious terms suggesting

that this can be achieved by invoking the spirit of Mary so that the 'universe' is

'already made flesh or capable of becoming flesh, and remaining in excess in the

existing world' (p.190). For Irigaray, the excess or alterity needing to be written

into the Word is that of the flesh, the body and the sensual.

Berkeley also writes poetry that transgresses the boundaries we take for granted

between the body and space, as her poems project an inner state onto an outer

landscape and vice versa. The movement of her poetry is comparable with

Cixous's comments on art:

> Art is the conduit from the inside to the outside, leads abroad, to the unknown
> ... Art clears the way for an inside-out-side. It puts within reach that which is
> unknown to me (p.169) ... it is as if I were writing on the inside of myself. It is
> as if the page were really inside. The last outside possible. As close as possible
> to the body. As if my body enveloped paper. (p.105)

Neither can Berkeley's aesthetic attempt to know, sanitize, delimit or contain

alterity. Rather, she presents it as not 'other' but inside her and leaking out; it is

part of her own subjectivity and other subjectivities.

Berkeley's nomadic writing longs for areas of silence, in-between the official

cacophonies, in a flirt with radical nonbelonging and outsidedness.[73] Her writing

strategy connects with Deleuze and Guattari who in no way privilege the

sovereign subject, the independent other, or the bonds of communication and

representation between them. Their interest is in the "partial objects", processes,

flows which show no respect for the autonomy of the subject.[74] As Margrit

Shildrick notices in Leaky Bodies and Boundaries (1997):

> The whole point of appropriating postmodern critical theories for a feminist ethics is to uncover the way in which values are constructed, not in order to deny the possibility of value, but in order to suggest new configurations that no longer function on the basis of exclusion.[75]

To use Levinas's terms, this is to find ways of knowing that do not rely on the sovereignty and self-presence of the subject and the denial of alterity. Berkeley's poetry also presents the subject in process whereby knowledge, autonomy, the bonds of communication and representation between subjectivities are called into question. The poems in <u>Facts About Water</u> do not grasp, do not take possession but take excursions as the poetry requires that one leaves the realms of the known, and takes oneself where one does not expect, is not expected to be.[76]

This drive towards nomadic subjectivities is not necessarily a postmodern dissolving of identity but a way of freeing up constricting versions of identity that have been linked with colonialism, nationalism and patriarchy. To re-depart from a prescribed model of identity and to challenge our ability to represent is not without a politics. For instance, the Vietnamese film maker Trinh T. Minh-ha's essay 'Cotton and Iron' (1990) explores migrancy and the problematic of representing a plurality of identities in terms of the differential:

> Re-departure: the pain and frustration of having to live a difference that has no name and too many names already. Marginality: who names? whose fringes? An elsewhere that does not merely lie outside the center but radically striates it. Identity: the singular naming of a person, a nation, a race, has under-gone a reversal of values. Effacing it used to be the only means of survival for the colonized and the exiled; naming it today often means declaring solidarity among the hyphenated people of the Diaspora ... Identity is a way of re-departing ... Since identity can very well speak its plurality without suppressing its singularity.[77]

Minh-ha's description of marginality looks to a space of 'transformation (with/out master) of other selves through one's self', so identity can speak its plurality without repressing its singularity.[78] Minh-ha treads a middle ground between 'singular naming' and 're-departing' to find a marginal 'elsewhere that

does not merely lie outside the center but radically striates it'. The movement of Berkeley's poetry oscillates between a singular foundation for identity (the facts) and a departure from or dissolution of it (the water), as she sits at the margin as 'the girl on the wall' who plumps for neither side of the line but looks 'between/ The lines'. Facts About Water does not offer a simple choice between facts and water, but deconstructs this binary either/or mode of philosophy revealing how the facts inhabit the water and the water erodes the facts.

In conclusion, this chapter has read Berkeley's poetry in terms of recent feminist and post-colonial writing as she transgresses the boundaries of home, body, space, thought and philosophy. Her poetry calls into question the ability to represent and to theorize, as she paces the limits of language in a way that is comparable with the poethics of Cixous, who attempts to write a poetic and ethical politics into philosophy. Berkeley, Braidotti, Cixous and Minh-ha share an interest in the tension between 'utopian potentiality' and how gendered bodies are positioned within unfree spaces. This tension between being possessed and dispossessed by language is demonstrated by the nomadic subjects of Facts About Water, where a number of subjectivities map their differing routes between land and sea, holding onto facts while facing the potential for flood.

Disengaging with what we take to be typically political, Berkeley's aesthetic writes of indefinite subjects in unlocatable places and their relationship with one another. Her poetry moves away from the myths of motherland into a different territory that does not ask questions such as: 'What is my nation? Am I a feminist poet? How can I repossess 'Woman' and 'Nation'?' Rather, this is a poetry that goes beyond the 'political' concerns of Boland's essays with the effect of creating not a 'political poetry' but an ethical aesthetic. That is, an

ethical aesthetic that thinks beyond the politics of a delimited sovereign territory,

sometimes called the nation-state, which is decried by the marine lover, Irigaray,

and Nietzsche[79]:

> The State – that cold monster that claims to be the people and, over the heads of
> the herds, hands a belief in love and the sword of desire. The State that speaks
> of good and evil in a single language and, in that one language, decrees only
> lies. For there is no common language that speaks the truth. And the State has
> stolen his language from each individual and then mixed them all up in one
> death wish. (p.25)

The poethics of Berkeley's <u>Facts About Water</u> show how this 'single language'

leaks.

'Notes to Chapter Six'

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[1] Sara Berkeley, 'Poles', Facts About Water: New & Selected Poems, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994), p.66. This chapter was first given as a paper for the Women-on-Ireland Network at Staffordshire University on 9[th] May 1998. It was later developed into another paper that was developed into the WERRC conference 'Celebrating Irish Writers' which took place from 26[th]-29[th] May 1999. I would like to thank my audiences for their lively debate and thought-provoking questions. It is currently being considered for publication by Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal.

[2] Cf. Appendices Five for my correspondence with Sara Berkeley.

[3] Berkeley, Facts About Water:, pp.60-1, p.66, p.75. All further references are to this edition and are cited in parentheses in the text. These poems have been chosen as representative of poetic concerns with nomadic bodies and spaces, l'écriture féminine, deterritorialization, poetic travel and silence. Unfortunately, I cannot discuss in detail other poems that connect with these issues such as: Penn, (Dublin: Raven, 1986): 'Out In the Storm' (p.13), 'Brainburst' (p.14). Home Movie Nights, (Dublin: Raven, 1989): 'Pole-Bound' (p.21), 'A Time of Drought' (p.45), 'Maker of Rain' (p.48), 'The Figures in the Rain' (p.50), 'The Drowning Element' (p.51), 'Coming to Shore' (p.58). Facts About Water, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994): 'Man In Balloon' (p.56), 'The Drowning' (p.57), 'Man In Flight' (p.59), 'Tightrope' (p.74), 'Slender Girls' (p.78), 'At The Rails' (p.79) and 'Undertow' (p.90).

[4] Edward Said, 'The Mind In Winter: Reflection of Life in Exile', Harper's, No.269, (September 1984), p.54.

[5] Said, 'Secular Criticism', The World, the Text, the Critic, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983). Bearing in mind the heavily inscribed spaces of Palestinian and Israeli territories in Jerusalem, and the sectarian spaces of Belfast, hope for free or neutral space seems optimistic, even in the light of international intervention and peace negotiation.

[6] Sarah Fulford, 'An Interview With Tom Paulin', Eliot College, The University of Kent, Tuesday 26[th] November 1996. By request, Paulin asked me to leave this part of the interview out of the transcript of my publication for the Irish Studies Review, No.19, Summer 1997.

[7] Cf. Paul Muldoon's satire on this in his poem 'Lunch with Pancho Villa', Mules (1977), New Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), pp.25-7.

[8] Tom Paulin, Writing to the Moment, (London: Faber, 1996), p.103.

[9] Ibid., p.101.

[10] Ibid., p.105.

[11] Theodor Adorno, 'Commitment', Aesthetics and Politics, trans. Francis MacDonagh, ed., R. Livingstone, P.Anderson, F.Mulhern, New Left Books, p.177. First published as Noten zur Literatur, III, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965).

[12] Ibid., p.91.

[13] Ibid., p.98.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] 'Introduction', Séan Hand, ed., The Levinas Reader, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.7.

[17] Levinas, 'Ethics as First Philosophy' (1984), Richard Kearney and Maria Rainwater eds., The Continental Philosophy Reader, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.126.

[18] Ibid., p.124.

[19] Ibid., p.125.

[20] Hand, ed., 'Introduction', Levinas Reader, p.6.

[21] Levinas, 'Ethics as First Philosophy', p.128.

[22] Hand, ed., Levinas Reader, p.144.

[23] Ibid., p.6.

[24] Cf. Edmund Husserl's Vienna Lecture, 'Philosophy in the Crisis of European Mankind', The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970); Martin Heidegger, 'The Formal Structure of the Question of Being', 'Introduction' to Being and Time, trans. J. Macquarrie and E.Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967). 'Phenomenology' can be defined as 'the science of phenomena distinct from being' [The Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Ninth Edition, ed., Della Thompson, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p.1025] that "inspects one's own conscious, and particularly intellectual processes. In the inspection all

assumptions about the wider and external causes and consequences of these internal processes have to be excluded ('bracketed')". 'Ontology' can be described as a branch of metaphysical inquiry concerned with the study of existence itself (considered apart from the nature of any existent object)'. A Dictionary of Philosophy, ed., Anthony Flew, (London: Pan/ Macmillan, 1979), pp.255-6, p.266.

[25] Levinas, 'Ethics as First Philosophy', p.129.

[26] Ibid., pp.129-30.

[27] Levinas's philosophy is the unacknowledged basis of much post-colonial and feminist thinking and this warrants further study that unfortunately cannot be covered within the limits of this thesis.

[28] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', The Kristeva Reader, Toril Moi, ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

[29] Berkeley, 'The Drowning Element', Home Movie Nights, p.51. Gerardine Meaney, 'History Gasps: Myth in Contemporary Irish Women's Poetry', Poetry in Contemporary Irish Literature, Michael Kenneally, ed., Studies in Contemporary Irish Literary Studies 43, (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smyth, 1995), p.112.

[30] Meaney, 'History Gasps', p.113.

[31] Berkeley, 'A Time of Drought', Home Movie Nights, p.45.

[32] This is loosely reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's work and although there are no direct references to her texts in the poetry, it is noticeable that the protagonist in Berkeley's short story 'The Swimmer' from The Swimmer in the Deep Blue Dream (Dublin: Raven, 1991), bears the name 'Cam' who is notably one of Mrs. Ramsey's children from To The Lighthouse (1927). How far this is a coincidence or not is difficult to assess.

[33] Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, 'The Moral Party of Two', p.92.

[34] Ibid., p.95.

[35] Cf. Max Frisch, Sketchbook, 1946-1949, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977), p.17.

[36] Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, p.98.

[37] Ibid., p.101.

[38] Ibid., p.109.

[39] Cf. Seamus Heaney, Wintering Out and North, Selected Poems 1965-1975, (London: Faber, 1980).

[40] Hand, ed., Levinas Reader, p,152.

[41] Ibid., p.154.

[42] Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Quicksand', Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta, trans. Michael Hartnett, (Dublin: Raven, 1993); Medbh McGuckian, On Ballycastle Beach, (Meath: Gallery, 1995); p.85.Eavan Boland, 'Anna Liffey', Collected Poems, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990), pp.199-211.

[43] Luce Irigaray, Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p.3. All further references are to this edition and are cited in parentheses in the text.

[44] Rosi Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy, trans., Elizabeth Guild, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.51.

[45] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'Introduction: Rhizome', A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Vol.2, (London: Athlone, 1988), pp.3-26 or 'The Rhizome', On the Line, [New York: Semiotext(e), 1985], pp.1-69.

[46] Cf. Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance, p.120.

[47] Nelly Richard, 'Postmodernism and Periphery', and Simon During, 'Postmodernism or Post-colonialism Today', Postmodernism: A Reader, Thomas Docherty, ed., (London: Harvester, 1993), pp.463-470 and pp.448-62.

[48] Cf. Margrit Shildrick, Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)ethics, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.155.

[49] Luce Irigaray, "Sexual Difference", French Feminist Thought: A Reader, ed., Toril Moi, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p.124. Cf. Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'No Master Territories: Cotton and Iron' (1990), When the Moon Waxes Red, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.23.

[50] Cf. Shildrick, Leaky Bodies, p.143.

[51] Berkeley, 'The Girl Who Went To Live On A Wall', Home Movie Nights, p.47.

[52] Paulin, 'Almost There' and 'That's It', Walking a Line, (London: Faber, 1994), pp.21, 104-5.

[53] Medbh McGuckian, 'On Ballycastle Beach', On Ballycastle Beach, (Meath: Gallery, 1988), pp.61-2.

[54] Cf. Ann Owens Weekes, '"An Origin like Water": The Poetry of Eavan Boland and Modernist Critiques of Irish Literature' Bucknell Review, Vol.28, No.1, 1994, pp.159-76.

[55] Cf. Irigaray, 'Plato's Hysteria', Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian Gill, (New York: Cornell, 1985).

[56] Paulin, 'Almost There', Walking A Line, (London: Faber, 1994), p.21.

[57] Deleuze, 'He Stuttered', Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy, eds., Constantin V. Boundas & Dorothea Olkowski, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.27.

[58] Heaney, 'The Swing', The Spirit Level, (London: Faber, 1996), p.48.

[59] Nancy Duncan, ed, Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.49. Such a geography has been contested by radical geographers such as Edward Soja in Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory, (London: Verso, 1989).

[60] Cf. Discussion of Medbh McGuckian in Chapter Four and Eavan Boland in Chapter Five.

[61] Eavan Boland, 'The Art of Grief', Collected Poems, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1995), pp.208-210.

[62] Paulin, 'Almost There', Walking A Line, p.21.

[63] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, trans., Maria Jolas, Foreword Etienne Gilson, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958, 1969), p.214.

[64] Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance, p.140.

[65] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, (London: Athlone, 1988), p.276. Cf. Elizabeth Grosz's essay on the uses of Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of deterritorialization for feminists entitled 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics', Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy ed., Boundas, pp.127-212. Here she argues via Rosi Braidotti and Luce Irigaray that while Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the body without organs is problematic for feminists, rhizomatics provides scope for feminist analysis and discussion.

[66] Ibid., p.281.

[67] Jacques Derrida refers to this in his essay, 'Structure, sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences', Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader, ed., David Lodge, (London: Longman, 1988), pp.108-123. From Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (1978).

[68] Hand, ed., Levinas Reader, p.292.

[69] Cf. Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimlich (The "uncanny")', New Literary History, Vol.3, Spring, 1976, pp.525-549.

[70] Cixous, Rootprints: Memory & Life Writing, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.103. All further references are cited in parentheses in the text.

[71] Julia Kristeva, 'Revolution In Poetic Language', The Kristeva Reader, ed., Toril Moi, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.112.

[72] James Joyce's writing on 'Anna Livia' can be connected not only with Boland but also with the semiotic seas of Kristeva's comment which brings him nicely into debate as to how far a man can write a feminine language. I would rather begin to leave this question behind suggesting as do Deleuze and Guattari that all subjectivities can employ deterritorializing modes of expression that calls into question the foundations of modern Western philosophy and an Enlightenment rationale. One only has to look at discussion of the 'Romantic sublime' in relation to Shelley to understand that challenging the limits of language is not just a female concern. Previous discussion of Heaney, Paulin and Muldoon, also notices the way in which male poets can look to the transgression of territorial and linguistic borderlines, using imagery of fluidity and flight as symbols of inspiration.

[73] Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects, p.16.

[74] Elizabeth Grosz, 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes', Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy, p.197.

[75] Shildrick, Leaky Bodies and Boundaries, p.139.

[76] Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance, p.26.

[77] Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Cotton and Iron' (1990), When The Moon Waxes Red, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.18.

[78] Ibid., p.21.

[79] Irigaray's note on this quotes from Nietzsche: "State is the name of the coldest of all monsters. Coldly it tells lies too, and this lie crawls out of its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people'. That is a lie! It was creators who created people and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served life". Thus Spoke Zarathustra, First Part, 'On The New Idol', The Portable Nietzsche, ed., & trans., W. Kaufmann, (New York: Viking, 1954), p.160.

CONCLUSION

WOMEN AND NATION: READINGS OF AUTHENTICITY

There was no corner so quiet that the problem of authenticity would not arise in it ...

Marshall Berman.[1]

As Colin Graham notices in his essay 'Ireland and the Persistence of

Authenticity' (1999), Revivalist constructions of the nation, typified by Yeats's

representation of Cathleen Ní Houlihan, rely upon a notion of cultural purity

whereby claims to access an authentic notion of 'Irishness' underlie cultural

nationalism: "The nation's very reason for being, its logic of existence, is its

claim to an undeniable authenticity as a pure expression of the 'real', the

obvious, the natural".[2] This thesis has explored how contemporary Irish poets

move away from Yeats's project of inventing an authentic sense of Irishness as

they problematize traditional concepts of gendered and national identity, that rely

on mythological and essentialist versions of the nation.

The methodology of the debate has drawn on feminist and post-colonial

theorization of identity to call into question the homogeneity on which Revivalist

assertions of gendered and national identity rely. This has led at a basic level to

the conclusion in sections two and three that there is an excess of the people over

the nation, and that identities cannot be fixed or monumentalized since

identification is a 'performative' process. The thesis has argued that this is

played out at a critical level within the poetry as, in their individual ways, the

writers present readers with 'deterritorializing', 'anti-foundational', 'hybrid',

'secretive', 'fluid' and 'nomadic' poetic voices. The effect of this is that, in

differing ways, their work calls into question the pathos of authenticity that informs the construction of 'Woman' and 'Nation'.

As a comparative study, the thesis has intended to show how the poets can be discussed together, yet their work is not the same since they employ different poetic strategies. Hence, the structure of the argument has treated each poet separately while linking the chapters together by grouping the poetry into thematic sections. Heaney's poetry from Station Island (1984) onwards was shown to deterritorialize and take routes away from rooted preoccupations with the Irish landscape, taking 'flight paths' out of Ireland and into the more international context of 'Tollund', where the speakers become

> ghosts who'd walked abroad
> Unfazed by light, to make a new beginning
> And make a go of it, alive and sinning,
> Ourselves again, free-willed again, not bad.[3]

Comparably, the thesis argued that Paulin's Walking a Line (1994) moves away from an Irish landscape and the overtly political concerns of Fivemiletown (1987), by drawing on the avant-garde inspiration of Paul Klee. Paulin's poetry was shown to problematize the foundational politics of his critical essays, with the effect of recharting the relation between aesthetics and politics. Whereas Heaney's work deterritorializes into a different landscape and explores the 'brim' of representation, section one argued that Paulin's poetry presents us with an unstable and delirious poetic voice that simultaneously walks a line and anticipates falling off it into 'a pool of light and illusion'.[4] This led to my discussion of 'délire' and 'making strange' in Paulin's collection which linked back to Heaney while moving forward to the dis-positions of Paul Muldoon.

My exploration of Muldoon's use of hybridity signified the differences

between Muldoon's work and the other poets, as his poetry draws attention to the

doubling of identity, and the ways in which modes of representing identity that

rely upon purity and fixity do not hold as in 'Blemish' when he asks:

> Were it indeed an accident of birth
> That she looks on the gentle earth
> And the seemingly gentle sky
> Through one brown, and one blue eye.[5]

In this vein, section one argued that in their differing ways, a Northern group of

male poets offer readers less grounded, and more complex conceptions of

identification and representation than is found in the earlier work of Heaney.

In section two the argument took discussion of deterritorialization and the post-

colonial onto a feminist level as it considered the ways in which gender calls into

question constructions of 'the national'. The poems of Eavan Boland and her

essays compare with 'What Foremothers?' (1996) by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, as

they expose the mythological status of History and question a national tradition.

Ní Dhomhnaill notices how within Irish literary and oral traditions the 'very

concept of a woman poet was inherently threatening' yet 'though the literary

canon was drawn up without them, there were women poets'.[6] Ní Dhomhnaill

has since rethought 'What Foremothers?' and turned her attention to a lost

tradition of Gaelic woman poets or foremothers whose work has been occluded.[7]

As well as women poets challenging the canon, section two noticed how

McGuckian and Boland's poetry questions established modes of representation

as they work with strategies of dis-identification and turn from foundational

models of identity to the fluid.

Referring to the work of Medbh McGuckian, the thesis argued that her poetry

is different from the other female poets as she plays 'cache-cache' with her

readers with the effect of simultaneously asserting and occluding identity, a

process which is typified in her image of 'a city that has vanished to regain/ Its

language'.[8] This led to the conclusion that her poetic vision locks itself away

from the overtly political in a secretive act of her-meticism that disallows total

possession. Paradoxically, this leads On Ballycastle Beach (1988) to a disruption

of place-logic in a collection that one initially imagines will represent a particular

place. The upshot of this is McGuckian's remapping of national and feminine

territories in a heavily metaphorical poetic voice that eludes the colonization of

the critic and which wraps up meaning like an Egyptian mummy.[9] This resulted

in analysis of the communicative act in relation to identity and representation

within the poems.

Communicating or voicing 'the female' was also shown to be a key concern

within Eavan Boland's poetry. However, her claims for her-storicity were shown

to differ in The Lost Land (1998) from McGuckian's secretive poetic when

Boland turns to the '[s]pirit of irony' with which to critique the misrepresentation

of the national tradition and to indicate the difficulties of finding a representative

voice for herself.[10] Discussing the monumental representation of the Irish

Woman as embodied by the statue of Anna Livia, the thesis noticed how

Boland's poetry moves from History to the double temporality of herstory, from

the sacred to the secular, and from authentic conceptions of 'Woman' and

'Nation' into the differential. Noticing her use of water imagery as she dissolves

the monuments of 'Woman' and Nation', Boland's work was compared with the

nomadic subjects of Sara Berkeley's Facts About Water (1994).

Ní Dhomhnaill has criticized 'the trope of Mother Ireland' to argue that Irish

women poets 'carry a map of Ireland on our backs' that needs to be shed.[11]

Berkeley's poetry was shown to find a fertile displacement, away from the

concerns of the nation-state since, like McGuckian, she employs geographic

metaphors in a non-specific fashion. Where she differs from the other poets is in

the way in which her poetry leaves Ireland altogether, providing few traces of

'Irishness' or her home country, as the poems move into the desert and

seascapes, and take flight into a 'light-year' and 'air'.[12] Moving even further

away from a politics of location and a rooted poetic, section three compared her

poetry with post-nationalism examining how Berkeley undermines the tie

between subjectivity and nationality in favour of a nomadicity that was

investigated in terms of the feminist debates of Rosi Braidotti and Hélène

Cixous. Using Irigary's Marine Lover (1991), the chapter on Berkeley argued

that feminist anti-foundational theorization of subjectivity that draws attention to

the instabilities of representation, provides us with an ethical aesthetic more open

to alterity, as it writes against the politics of a sovereign territory, sometimes

called the nation-state, which has sought to ground 'Woman' and 'Nation' within

a delimited terrain.

This led to the argument that to re-depart from prescribed models of identity

and to challenge our ability to represent is not without a politics. Here, the

argument drew on Trinh T. Minh-ha's essay 'Cotton and Iron' (1990) which

considers the representation of a plurality of identities in terms of the differential,

to show how homogenous and essentializing versions of identity necessarily leak

to 'acknowledge the complexities inherent in any speech act'. Noticing

'territorialized knowledge' that depends on 'a position of mastery', Minh-ha
comments:

> I am in the midst of knowing, acquiring, deploying world – I appropriate, own
> and demarcate my sovereign territory as I advance – while the "other" remains
> in the sphere of acquisition. Truth is the instrument of mastery which I exert
> over areas of the unknown as I gather them within the fold of the known.[13]

Analyzing the ways in which the poets use differing strategies to undermine the

singular language of 'Woman' and 'Nation', this thesis has called into question a

politics of representation that relies on mythological concepts of authenticity

which enable certain individuals to feel part of Benedict Anderson's notion of an

'imagined community' or, to use Jacqueline Rose's term, 'state of fantasy'.[14] At

the same time, the thesis has noticed points of connection between the poets and

the nation-state. The result of this has been to outline the ways in which the

different concepts of 'deterritorialization', 'délire', 'dis-position', the 'hybrid',

the 'secretive', the 'fluid' and the 'nomadic', introduce readers to poetic voices

that put representation, community, communication and authenticity under

pressure.

What follows is an analysis of the ways in which the tropes of 'Woman' and

'Nation' are revised by the poets, Michael O'Loughlin and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill

as they critique the representation of two key mythological characters,

Cuchulainn and Cathleen, who were vital figures within the cultural nationalism

of the Irish Literary Revival. These poets are here discussed since their poems

provide an opening into the theoretical conclusion of my research which

questions the relationship between national identity, authenticity, inauthenticity

and irony, which are issues that remain integral to the arguments of each chapter,

each section and the closing statements of this thesis. In addition, these poems

are investigated so as to suggest that the trends discovered in the previous debate are not confined to the six poets upon whose work this thesis has focused. It is necessary to stress, though, how at a broader level, the travel writing of O'Loughlin which leaves Ireland differs in its agenda from the Gaelic poetry and translations of Ní Dhomhaill. Even so, these poems have been chosen for a comparative study because they focus upon similar material within their writing such as the way in which the figures of Irish mythology can be called into question.

Contemporary Ireland, Cuchulainn and Cathleen[15]

Michael O'Loughlin's poem 'Cuchulainn' (1996) is an example of how the mythological heroes of Irish cultural nationalism which were conceived as representative of an authentic version of nationality, are treated more roughly by contemporary poets from Ireland.[16] The poem operates via a paradox that construes Cuchulainn by claiming to be unable to do so:

> If I lived in this place for a thousand years
> I could never construe you, Cuchulainn.
> Your name is a fossil, a petrified tree
> Your name means less than nothing.[17]

The poet claims to be unable to construe the national hero because he is so dated. However, paradoxically, the poem does construe Cuchulainn and demonstrates his shadowy presence within contemporary Irish culture. For example, his 'name is a fossil' and as 'petrified' as is his statue in the General Post Office in Dublin. 'An obvious Martian in human disguise' he is from another planet, a hackneyed alien from an 'American Sci-Fi serial' who is removed from Ireland and cannot

relate to 'Earthlings', understand their language or what they 'Speak of'. Even so, his image is still part of the iconography of the nation-state and is present none the less in the mind of the modern poet, and also for Dubliners posting their letters.

Although Cuchulainn at first appears as an anachronism who does not fit with the backdrop of concrete tower blocks and domestic violence, and seems disconnected from urban life in Dublin, he still lives in the subconscious of people as their home is '[n]amed after an Irish Patriot/ Who died with your name on his lips'. His name on the patriot's lips who provides a name for a modern day tower block, bears testimony to the way a post-colonial culture looks to a mythologized past before colonialism in order to assert a nationalist future after colonialism. In the poem, Cuchulainn's ancient presence is held alongside 'Phoenix Audio-Visual Systems' and the graffiti in the 'children's playground'. Contemporary life and the presence of myth, are both juxtaposed and held together in the poem.

As O'Loughlin connects the violence of colonialism and that of a patriotic hero with that of the violence inflicted on the modern day housewife whose eyes are 'battered and bruised', there is no sense of freedom for the woman, no room for heroes such as Cuchulainn and no place for the mythological version of Ireland visited by the Irish Literary Revival. For the speaker, the meaning of Cuchulainn is translated in terms of a tranquilizer, 'Librium', and the television that has become a new purveyor of myth, heroes and official versions of national history as communicated by the media. Brand names are used in the poem as though modern meaning and identity are dispersed into a process of commodification, or even as though identity and meaning have been commodified.[18] Both the

tranquilizer and the television are meaningless in the way that they annul lived experience, creating a vacuum. Cuchulainn is imagined as part of a similar historical vacuum of the inauthentic that is left behind by myth; he is little more than a brand name. It is therefore appropriate that it is 'watching the TV the other night' that the poet begins to construe Cuchulainn as a 'corny revenant' of science fiction. Cuchulainn is represented as a part of and apart from everyday life in Ireland. In this way, his figure in the poem provides a personification of the crisis within Irish identity that O'Loughlin has identified in his comments on the 'paradoxical mixture of belonging and alienation'.[19] The tradition by which Cuchulainn has been beamed down to Irish school children as they learn their national language is splintered: Irish myth is part of their experience of Ireland and apart from it.

The Gaelic poet, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, also relocates Irish myth and the Irish language within a contemporary context. She too uses the figure of Cuchulainn as a means of calling into question not only the authenticity of Irish myth but also the purity of the Irish language and names. Mary O'Connor notices her polygot use of diction, numerous dialect usages and spelling variations from Irish itself. Readers of Gaelic feel a sense of defamiliarization whilst reading Ní Dhomhnaill's Irish as she uses different forms and voices that serve as a testimony to the multiple cultural influences of her poetry, and challenge the 'at homeness' of the language for the reader. An example of this is found in part two of her 'Cú Chulainn' sequence (1993) when Cú Chulainn says to his mother: 'take the fag from your lip a minute'.[20] The standard Irish for cigarette, being 'toitín' is, in Ní Dhomhnaill's Gaelic text, semi-anglicized into the word 'feaig' which is neither orthodox Irish nor English.[21]

O'Connor also notices how the traditional myth of Cú Chulainn as Ulster hero has been rewritten so he is represented in the role of loutish lover and soap opera character: hero born of multiple fathers, he asks his mother to put away her knitting, take the fag out of her mouth a minute and tell him who was his father. His childhood, filled with courage, is reduced to a fairly meaningless existence as he throws stones at trains while his single mother abandons him to go to the pub.[22] Rather than being the centre of attention, he complains in Michael Hartnett's translation:

> I'm fed up living
> on the edges of your lives
> thrown in a heap on the pub doorstep
> when you go drinking porter.[23]

According to myth, Cú Chulainn was

> ... a low-sized man doing many deeds of arms; there are many wounds on his smooth skin; there is light about his head, there is victory on his forehead; he is young and beautiful, and modest towards women; but he is like a dragon in the battle.[24]

However, elsewhere in Ní Dhomhnaill's Cuchulainn sequence he is presented as a 'small poor dark man' 'who'd satisfy no woman'. The mythological version of Cú Chulainn as an irresistible hero is undermined and so a national giant is cut down to size; he is turned from a hallowed and sacred figure, into a secular and seedy little character; a bastard who asks Deichtine 'who is my father?'

The effects of the 'Cú Chulainn' poems are defamiliarizing, in the Brechtian sense, whereby the familiar and authentic terrain of Irish myth is changed and challenged. Ní Dhomhnaill makes strange what is familiar and a further example of this is in her poem 'Cathleen' (1991, 1992) where she reassesses the figure of Mother Ireland. In his own poem entitled 'Aisling', Paul Muldoon has already questioned the legitimacy of gendering the nation.[25] It is important to consider

how Muldoon's English translation of a Gaelic poem that undermines authentic

versions of the nation or 'Cathleen', further complicates questions of authenticity

since he is a male Northern poet who translates the work of a female Southern

poet, and thus changes the 'true' version. In 'Cathleen' Muldoon translates Ní

Dhomhnaill's poem 'Caitlín' into English, and he plays with original versions of

Cathleen Ní Houlihan who is presented as anyone's 'granny' with a 'permanent

wave', selective hearing and a tendency to boast about her wild youth:

> You can't take her out for a night on the town
> without her either showing you up or badly letting you down:
> just because she made the Twenties roar
> with her Black and Tan Bottom – O Terpsichore –[26]

Alongside this version of Cathleen as dancing queen, floozie and possible

collaborator, the poem also presents the traditional version of Cathleen Ní

Houlihan who is 'without blemish or blight', and appeals to a nationalist and

Revivalist ideal of Ireland as a pastoral utopia. Hence, she 'highsteps' in a

stately way by the 'ocean' seeking aid from abroad and is as pure as the driven or

'fresh fall of snow'.

This can be compared with the first two stanzas of a traditional lyric about

Ireland written by the aisling poet Aogan O Rathaille (1675-1729) which is

translated by Thomas Kinsella. In this poem Ireland, as a beautiful woman, is

'[b]rightest most bright' and her hair sweeps up 'the dew from the grass' as she

is 'created, in a higher world' and is comparable with iconography of another

idealized woman, the Virgin Mary.[27]   In Ní Dhomhnaill's poem she is also

'brightest of the bright', her hair curls albeit artificially, and she is slightly dewy

as the snow falls 'on her broadest of broad brows' and on her shoes in the second

stanza. Ní Dhomhnaill is drawing on a male bardic tradition as it appreciates the

woman as nation only to overturn it.

In the final stanza the speaker disparagingly comments:

> For you'd think to listen to her she'd never heard
> that discretion is the better part, that our names are writ
> in water, that the greenest stick will wizen:
> even if every slubberdegullion once had a dream-vision
> in which she appeared as his own true lover,
> those days are just as truly over.

Times change as even 'the greenest stick will wizen'. Here, green can signify

both youth and the colour associated with Irish nationalism.

The phrase 'our names are writ/ in water' also suggests that identity eventually

dissolves and has little stable foundation on which to ground itself and be

remembered. This water imagery links with poems written three years later by

McGuckian as in 'On Ballycastle Beach' (1995) which ends with the image of

the 'old escape and release/ Of water's speech, faithless to the end'. It also

compares with Eavan Boland's 'Anna Liffey' (1995) which ends with identity

conceived as fluid and seeking its own dissolution by 'rivers' 'enroute to/ Their

own nothingness'.[28] What these female poets hold in common is their tendency

to employ water imagery as a way of dissolving traditional models of gender and

nation. Moreover, clichés such as: 'the greenest stick will wizen' and

'discretion is the better part', (a saying that is not even finished off within the

poem since it is so well known), create a further ambivalence. The poetic

speaker's critical attitude is undercut by the overall tone of blarney and reliance

upon received phrases. Muldoon's translation parodies the judgmental and

gossiping voice of the poetic speaker as much as it critiques the image of

Cathleen.

In the essay 'Making Strange to See Afresh: Re-visionary Techniques in Some Contemporary Irish Poetry' (1990), Toni O'Brien Johnson concludes that assured no pre-colonial cultural essence can be recovered, Ní Dhomhnaill and O'Loughlin rewrite the Cú Chulainn myth in irreverent ways whereby he is not an ancient heroic model but a figure of fun.[29] Ní Dhomhnaill's transgression of accepted forms of the Irish language and myth has the effect of overturning a museum culture of nationalism that fossilized the past. Ní Dhomhnaill's new nationalism reinvents traditional stories and, in so doing, she reinscribes the basis of an Irish national culture whilst challenging colonial interruption of an earlier Irish past. Her sequence on the Cú Chulainn myth goes back in time to bring the past forward to the present day of single mothers going to the pub with the effect that an older more sacred world collides with the contemporary and secular world.[30] Ní Dhomhnaill and O'Loughlin question the relevance of authentic modes of cultural expression within contemporary Ireland and ironically revise them. By alluding then to the inauthenticity of the traditional tropes of 'Woman' and 'Nation' they construct what Colin Graham identifies as 'a possible alternative formation of the authentic in Irish culture' 'to posit a revised, ironic authenticity as a replacement'.[31]

Inauthentic Identities

As Jacob Golomb notices in his book In Search of Authenticity (1995):

> The principle aim of writers on authenticity was to evoke in their readers the pathos of authenticity. They hoped to restore a personal mental power and sense of selfhood that modernity had diminished ... literature is particularly helpful in engaging the reader's attention and provoking her to action, since it tempts the reader to follow the path of authenticity without making this explicit, and more importantly, without defining authenticity.[32]

Golomb reads Jean-Paul Sartre to argue that the quest for authenticity presupposes salvation where none is available.[33] The poets in this thesis also find that inauthenticity is inescapable. Golomb argues: 'The state will aggressively attempt to own each Dasein's Being, regarding it as an object to be used, instead of allowing each Dasein to realize its individual aim of owning its own Being'.[34] Here, the word 'owning' is appropriate; the Greek sense of authenticity is 'having auctoritas' or possessing inherent authority. In this way, the Greek makes a connection between authenticity and authority. For example, 'auctoritas' involves a will to power and an imperialist mode of subjectivity akin to that criticized in the previous chapter by Luce Irigaray in Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche (1991) and in my use of Trinh T. Minh-ha's essay 'Cotton and Iron' (1990) which calls for no master territories. It is precisely this 'auctoritas' from which the poets I have discussed flee with a poetry that disrupts authority, place-logic and the pathos for authentic models of identification. As we have seen in Berkeley's poems, such a metaphysics of presence or at-homeness is impossible, and is constantly infiltrated by alterity and the unheimlich as she presents us with a man who 'hardly seemed/ at home in his set of bones'.[35] As with the Northern poets, staking out a particular representative territory is problematic, repetitive of the structures of colonialism, and plagued by deterritorialization as the facts written in the sand will be washed away by water.

Within an Irish context, whereby part of the country is dispossessed from the nation or colonized by the British, the national home becomes unheimlich and overrun with strangers with the effect that the subjects of such a territory occupy a contested ground such as that imagined by Daniel Corkery with his notion of

the 'quaking sod'. My discussion has noticed how the decolonizing politics of

Irish nationalism seek to construct a more authentic sense of the national heim

with which to counteract the inauthenticity and not-at-homeness which has been

created by British imperialism as it made a country strange or foreign to itself.

However, in my exploration of the poets, I have noticed how the national heim is

not as homely as it might be, especially not for the women poets who experience

a double dispossession from 'The Lost land' whose tradition has, in Boland's

terms, 'edited' them out of the picture, and is typified by McGuckian's poem

'The Heiress' (1982) where the 'birth/ Of an heiress means the gobbling of

land'.[36]

As Sumita Chakravarty notices in her thesis Identity and Authenticity (1987):

'it is important to remember that a nation is a dialectical unity, it is constructed in

and against ideas of disunity and difference which it is the work of "nationalism"

to transcend'.[37] Gareth Griffiths argues in his essay 'The Myth of Authenticity'

(1994):

> There are real dangers in recent representations of indigenous peoples ... which
> stress claims to an 'authentic' voice. For these claims may be a form of
> overwriting the complex actuality of difference equal but opposite to the more
> overt writing out of that voice in earlier oppressive discourses of reportage; in
> fact it may well be the same process at work, and the result may be just as
> crippling to the efforts of indigenous peoples to evolve an effective strategy of
> recuperation and resistance.[38]

Griffiths is troubled that the 'possibilities of subaltern speech are contained by

the discourse of the oppressor' and that "the sign of 'authenticity' is an act of

'liberal' discursive violence, parallel in many ways to the inscription of the

'native' (indigene) under the sign of the savage".[39] He argues:

> The danger I want to draw attention to resides not in the inscription of the
> alter/native meta-text as such, but in the specific employment of this meta-text
> under the sign of the authentic to exclude the many and complex voices ...[40]

Griffiths notices how in the texts he has studied within an Australian Aboriginal

context, 'what is implicit is that any single narrative strand ... resists the idea of a

unified construction of history or place'.[41]

It is precisely such a resistance that I have also drawn attention to in my

readings of the unstable representations of history and place within the poets

under discussion in this thesis. Griffiths notices how critics should undermine

'the myth of authenticity' and 'its authority over the subjected whilst

simultaneously recognizing the crucial importance of recovering a sense of

difference and identity'. Moreover:

> ... the discussion being articulated across the boundaries of the discourses of the
> dominant and the dominated is not (as colonial texts suggest) between the pure
> and the tainted, or (as the white myth of the authentic suggests) between the
> tainted and the recovered pure, but between two orders of the impure. They
> therefore dismantle the order of the dominant by uncovering its own
> construction, and refuse to be replicated as an 'other' in a reversed binarism
> which leaves the dominant intact, or which, indeed, in an important sense, calls
> it into being.[42]

It is therefore necessary for post-colonial readings of identity to acknowledge

how

> ... the 'voice' of the indigene may in fact be overdetermined by the voice of the
> oppressor, and that the speech of the authentic may be inscribed in a space
> which is dominated by the systematic structures of the oppressor's discourse,
> whether this is expressed in the form of overt racism or in more liberal forms of
> discursive 'violence'.[43]

A strategy of resistance is conducted therefore 'through texts which show that the

voice of authority is itself a production of hybridization'.[44]

'The Myth of Authenticity' (1994) is a crucial essay since it demonstrates the

degree to which

> ... the narrative of the indigene is being constructed within the larger disabling
> narrative of the oppressor, and how in our own times the position of the 'liberal'

> voice and even, in certain cases, the voice of direct resistance is seduced towards an acceptance of an overdetermined narrative of authenticity and indigeneity which overrides the complex actualities of the social and political condition ...[45]

This thesis has demonstrated how the 'overdetermined narrative of authenticity and indigeneity' typified by the models of 'Woman' and 'Nation' are overridden by difference, and this is exemplified by the complex and often hybrid representations of identity offered to readers by the poets under discussion. The thesis has proven how, like the poetry, post-colonial criticism has moved away from essentialist modes of nationalism that seek to transcend disunity and difference, and this has been best typified by the work of Homi Bhabha who has outlined how decolonizing discourses are conditional upon the dominant discourse: 'For it is between the edict of Englishness and the assault of the dark unruly space of the earth, through an act of repetition, that the colonial text emerges uncertainly'.[46]

In his essay 'Orientalism Reconsidered' (1986), Edward Said has criticized anti-imperialist critiques that 'depend also on a homogenizing and incorporating world historical scheme that assimilated non-synchronous developments, histories, cultures and people to it'.[47] Said describes '[t]he great horror I think we should feel towards systematic or dogmatic orthodoxies of one sort or another'.[48] Against 'dogmatic orthodoxies', Said looks to a performative process of instability and 'contrapuntal juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgements'.[49] Likewise, such a straightforward assimilation of identity into a nationalist or colonialist mindset is resisted by the poets in this thesis as they problematize the relationship between subjectivity and the politics of the nation-state.

Criticism, Mastery and Irony

In 'The Flight Path' Heaney is asked: 'When, for fuck's sake, are you going to write/ Something for us?'; while Muldoon, in 'Lunch With Pancho Villa' presents the poet being chastized for writing about 'stars and horses, pigs and trees' rather than getting 'down to something true,/ Something a little nearer home'.[50] Refusing to write for his coercive critic who 'sits down/ Opposite and goes for me head on'; ignoring the demand to write for a homogenizing 'us', Heaney's speaker answers: 'If I do write something, / Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself'.[51] In this way, Heaney sets up an oppositional relationship between the singularity of his writing and the assimilative politics of a homogenizing nationalist attitude which is, by implication, inauthentic and desires to turn the poet into a copy of 'us'.

The critics in Heaney's and Muldoon's poems are anxious about the way in which the poet is not writing in the way that the national 'us' would like. Within the context of Irish literature, Gerry Smyth notices in his analysis, Decolonization and Criticism (1998), how criticism is linked with colonization. Such mastery has already been investigated in my analysis of Luce Irigaray's Marine Lover (1991) and Trinh T. Minh-ha's 'Cotton and Iron' (1990), and has been shown to be undermined particularly in my readings of the elusive poetic of Medbh McGuckian. Smyth draws on Paul de Man's 'Criticism in Crisis' (1971) and Thomas Docherty's 'Tragedy and the nationalist condition of criticism' (1996) which argues that criticism is founded upon 'an anxiety about exteriority' and is thus 'tied firmly to the place-logic of the nation-state', as criticism attempts to 'master' the cultural text, which is what Minh-ha noticed six years earlier.[52] Critical mastery of the cultural text is thus compared with the nation's

attempt to master its 'others': "the critic's attempt to 'master' the cultural text engages with, and resonates in, political discourse as the (English) nation's attempt to master its (colonial, specifically African) Others".[53]

However, Smyth makes the important distinction between different kinds of critical discourse to argue that some modes of criticism are more masterful than others:

> Docherty's dismissal of three centuries of literary criticism as essentially uncritical is ... untenable when it comes to an analysis of how a set of practices called 'criticism' has actually functioned in a range of societies over that same period ... it is a small step from the criticism/ nationalism connection ... to the criticism/ decolonisation connection ...[54]

In view of this, Smyth notices how

> For many, the most interesting and promising approach to these questions is predicated not on a rejection of, or alternative to, the identitarian discourse of liberal and racial modes, but on their displacement and performance in what Said has called an anti-authoritarian, anti-institutional, anti-narrative discourse.[55]

As I noticed in my discussion of 'displacement', the 'performative' and 'dis-identification', such a critical strategy is undertaken by the poets as, in their differing ways, they disrupt 'place-logic' to provide a 'politics of displacement' whereby, to use Smyth's terms, 'the given categories are (necessarily) performed, but in such a way as to question their givenness, their authenticity, their originality'. Smyth calls this practice a 'parody of originals' that claim authority and essence.[56]

It is precisely such a dissident practice that takes place in O'Loughlin and Ní Dhomhnaill's critical poetic portrait of Cuchulainn and Cathleen which parody their originals, whilst paying attention to the mythological nature of claims to be authentic. This is played out at a significant level in contemporary Irish poetry and, as Clair Wills has noticed with reference to three of these poets,

(McGuckian, Muldoon and Paulin), they write out 'improper' poetic discourses. At the risk of situating the poets within a definitive and conclusive positioning, (albeit one of dis-position), this thesis, (a noun coming from the Greek meaning 'to place'), has sought to show how it is characteristic of poets from both genders, and from the North and the South of Ireland, to undermine the placement of identity and utterance within customary frames of representation.

Such a concluding statement depends upon noticing points of connection or a similar 'place' from which the poets come which at a certain level juxtaposes with their differing techniques of displacement. In view of the discourse celebrating transgression that informs my readings of the poets, and my use of feminist and post-colonial theorization, it is necessary then to differentiate between a criticism that attempts to colonize literature and to delimit a poem in an act of mastery, and a criticism that endeavours to draw attention to the instabilities of the text and the way in which the text evades mastery. This was discovered most poignantly in the discussion of Muldoon, McGuckian and Berkeley whose poetry lends itself to a criticism that can find no easy foundational positioning. Even so, no critical framework is entirely exempt from placing certain limits upon the text and as Muldoon has noticed: 'We all know that if we try to nail a thing down it can pull the nail out and walk away'.[57]

Bearing in mind then, the uneasy complicity between criticism, delimitation, mastery, the nation-state and the institution, which is outlined by Smyth, this thesis concludes by calling back the dissonances played out at a critical level in O'Loughlin and Ní Dhomhnaill's ironic revision of the myths of Cuchulainn and Cathleen. In 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity', Colin Graham describes at the level of advertisement, the possibility of ironically

deconstructing the Irish authenticity of the folkish, rural and legendary in an attempt to posit a revised, ironic authenticity as a replacement.[58] Such 'an ironic authenticity' is written out as a critical methodology in 'Cuchulainn', 'Cú Chulainn' and 'Cathleen'. As they debunk authentic conceptions of 'Woman' and 'Nation', these poets posit no saved space for pure critical strategies but rather an awareness of complicity and subversion in the face of what have been perceived as 'authentic' modes of cultural expression. In this way, their poems are comparable with the strategies of displacement, dis-positioning and dis-identification that are utilized in differing ways by the other poets on which the thesis has drawn.

This thesis concludes then, not with a straightforward celebration of the transgressive aspects of contemporary Irish poetry, post-colonial and feminist criticism. Unlike Marshall Berman, my argument cannot hope to hold up a 'politics of authenticity' as an exemplary 'dream of an ideal community in which individuality will not be subsumed and sacrificed, but fully developed and expressed'.[59] Rather, the thesis ends by recollecting Boland's cautionary poem, 'The Necessity for Irony' (1998) not so as to provide an authentic reading of the poem by which an authentic politics can be established. Rather, 'The Necessity for Irony' writes out an ironic critique of the pressures of inauthenticity by which the poet is constantly troubled. In this poem, Boland acknowledges her complicity with historical erasure which is precisely what she has hoped in her career to avoid. Boland's 'The Necessity For Irony' outlines the need for a critical vigilence, the desire to look for what is occluded and the hope of moving from a customary 'civil tone' into an uncustomary 'darker one'.[60] Boland's poem seeks a style of 'ironic authenticity' that self-reflexively brings into

question poetic form not so as to provide us with a poetry that is more pure but so as to draw attention to the inauthenticity of poetic discourse or its impurities.

A critical awareness of received cultural norms/forms, informs the intellectual agenda of the poets under discussion in this thesis. An ironic attention to the simultaneous complicity with and potential subversion of dominant forms of cultural expression, such as the monuments of 'Woman' and 'Nation', is also integral to the feminist, post-colonial and Irish criticism that has been drawn upon in this thesis for its critique of 'the jargon of authenticity' which becomes criticized as jargon.[61] In view of Said's contrapuntal juxtapositions and Boland's irony, Muldoon's dissembling lines from 'Twice' (1994) come to mind as a fitting/misfitting exercise in such an ironic poetic/critical dissonance: 'Two places at once was *it, or one place twice?' Muldoon's 'contrapuntal'* question encapsulates the contemporary Irish poetry explored in this thesis in what Said calls an 'atonal ensemble'[62] which uproots from fixed and monumental representations of identity, using 'performative', 'displacing' and 'fluid' techniques that, as Boland's 'Art of Grief' suggests, have little 'cadence'.[63] The 'Art of Grief' writes of a grief and art form that is 'unrhymical', 'unpredicatable' and 'unmusical', and which does not sing to the beat of the conventional song of 'music-makers' and 'metric-makers'. However, the poem is still trapped within the conventional form of poetic discourse as it calls into question a traditional artistic form as represented by the statue, by looking to an unconventional way of representing the woman. From Boland's statues to revision of the figures of 'Cathleen' and 'Cuchulainn', contemporary Irish poetry mediates myths of gender and nationality, not to escape from them but so as to provide readers with

a critical displacement of 'Woman' and 'Nation', in favour of less fixed and more 'performative' modes of identity formation.

Postscript: Cultivation, Colonization and Cultural Capital

The unavoidable paradox of such an observation is that it still to a certain extent relies on suggesting authentic readings of the poetry in order to critique authenticity; that is, to dwell with the truth content of the poem so as to attack truth. It is therefore necessary to clarify further the position of this thesis: first, my argument attacks not simply claims to be authentic or true, but the routinization of cultural authority whereby it is the norm for one particular model of identity (Cuchulainn/ Cathleen) to be considered as representative of 'the people', thus suffocating other modes of cultural expression or other possibilities. Second, the closing comments of this debate acknowledge, via the work of Irigaray and Said, the complicity of criticism with mastery as the critic risks delimiting the diversity of cultural expression by claiming an authentic reading of the work of art in order to gain 'cultural capital', so as to claim authority over a given field or to demonstrate her/his cultivation.

The relationship between authenticity and cultural authority needs to be teased out further, and can be visited in an exploratory fashion by way of Pierre Bourdieu whose work on 'cultural capital' notices how consumption of the work of art is

> ... a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit *mastery* of a cipher or code .... That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences.[64]

Discussion in this thesis has endeavoured to problematize the 'communication' of the poems so that the 'explicit mastery of a cipher or code' on the part of the critic who reveals an authentic message within the work of art is shown to be necessarily difficult. It is not truth, but the routinization of cultural authority masquerading as authentic, that has been called into question. In view of this, this thesis ends with no escape route for the writer that leads into a pure and untainted form of art or criticism, but by drawing attention to how the writer is complicit with cultural mastery and the routinization of cultural authority.

Such a display of cultural authority is played out within the convention of writing a thesis which answers the demand inscribed within its root coming from the Greek 'tithemi' which means 'to place'. It is required that the critic masters a field, orients readers and stakes her/his claim, which relies upon demonstrating her/his cultivation, and this is uncomfortably close to the delimiting discourse and politics of colonialism.[65] The poets in this thesis try to cut away from the roots of 'tithemi' and, like the post-colonial and feminist writers under discussion, they attempt to problematize a tradition of cultivation that straightforwardly claims 'a sense of place', with the effect of writing out a troubled relationship that displaces 'authoritarian' and 'authentic' modes of cultural expression. Ní Dhomhnaill and O'Loughlin exemplify this process with their critiques of the figures of Cuchulainn and Cathleen. This results in a critical situation whereby the calling to authenticity, authority and 'cultural capital' is not avoided by the writers but neither is it met without suspicion.

'Notes To Conclusion'

[1] Marshall Berman, The Politics of Authenticity, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p.198. Cf. Colin Graham's criticism of advertisements representing Ireland which engages with Luke Gibbons's Transformations in Irish Culture, (Cork: University Press, 1996) in 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity', Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity, eds., Colin Graham & Richard Kirkland, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp.7-28.

[2] Cf. Colin Graham's criticism of advertisements representing Ireland which engages with Luke Gibbons's Transformations in Irish Culture, (Cork: University Press, 1996) in 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity', Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity, eds., Colin Graham & Richard Kirkland, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp.7-28, p.8.

[3] Seamus Heaney, 'Tollund', The Spirit Level, (London: Faber, 1996), p.69.

[4] Tom Paulin, 'That's It', Walking a Line, (London: Faber, 1994), p.105.

[5] Paul Muldoon, 'Blemish', New Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), p.30.

[6] Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'What Foremothers?', The Comic Tradition in Irish Women Writers, (Florida: University Press, 1996), pp.12-13.

[7] Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Conference Opening to the WERRC Seventh Annual Conference: "Celebrating Irish Women's Writing"', Wednesday 26[th] May 1999, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin. To be published.

[8] Medbh McGuckian, 'On Ballycastle Beach', On Ballycastle Beach, (Meath: 1988, 1995).

[9] Cf. Interview with Medbh McGuckian in Appendices Four.

[10] Eavan Boland, 'The Necessity For Irony', The Lost Land, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), p.55.

[11] Ní Dhomhnaill, 'WERRC Conference', Wednesday 26[th] May 1999.

[12] Sara Berkeley, 'Facts About Water', Facts About Water, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994), p.61.

[13] Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Cotton and Iron' (1990), When the Moon Waxes Red, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.12.

[14] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism, (London: Verso, 1983); Jacqueline Rose, States of Fantasy: The Clarendon Lectures in English Literature 1994, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[15] For iconography of Cuchulainn and Cathleen see Appendices Six.

[16] Shaun Richards has provided a very short but useful commentary on this in his paragraph on Michael O'Loughlin in his essay "'Breaking the Cracked Mirror': Binary Oppositions in the Culture of Contemporary Ireland", Colin Graham and Richard Kirkland, eds., Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p.105.

[17] Michael O'Loughlin, 'Cuchulainn', Another Nation, (Dublin: New Island, 1996), p.13.

[18] Neil Corcoran, English Poetry Since 1940, (London: Longman, 1993), p.210. Corcoran notes this in relation to the poetry of Ciaran Carson.

[19] O'Loughlin, After Kavanagh: Patrick Kavanagh and the discourse of contemporary Irish poetry, (Dublin: Raven, 1985), p.34.

[20] Ní Dhomhnaill, Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta, trans. Michael Hartnett, (Dublin: Raven, 1993), pp.114-5.

[21] Mary O'Connor, 'Lashings of the Mother Tongue: Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's Anarchic Laughter', The Comic Tradition in Irish Women Writers, Theresa O'Connor, ed., (Florida: University Press, 1996), p.153.

[22] Ibid., p.164.

[23] Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cú Chulainn II', Selected Poems trans. Hartnett, pp.114-115.

[24] Lady Gregory, Cuchulain of Muirthemne, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1993), pp.146-7.

[25] Paul Muldoon, 'Immram' from Why Brownlee Left (1980), New and Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), pp.54-64

[26] Ní Dhomhnaill, Astrakhan Cloak, trans., Muldoon, pp.38-41.

[27] Thomas Kinsella, ed., The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse, (Oxford: University Press, 1986), pp.195-196.

[28] Medbh McGuckian, 'On Ballycastle Beach', On Ballycastle Beach, (Meath: Gallery, 1988), p.62; Eavan Boland, 'Anna Liffey', In A Time of Violence, Collected Poems, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1995), p.204.

[29] Toni O'Brien Johnson, 'Making Strange to See Afresh: Re-visionary Techniques in some Contemporary Irish Poetry', Spell Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 5 On Strangeness, ed., Margaret Bridges, (Tübingen: Narr, 1990), p.143.

[30] Cf. Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History, trans. Willard R. Trask, (Princeton: University Press, 2nd edition, 1974).

[31] Graham, 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity', p.22.

[32] Jacob Golomb, In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus, Problems of Modern European Thought, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.19.

[33] Ibid., p.149.

[34] Ibid., p.117. Cf. Thus Spake Zarathustra, First Part: 'On The New Idol', The Portable Nietzsche, ed. & trans., W. Kaufmann, (New York: Viking, 1954), p.160.

[35] Sara Berkeley, 'Facts About Water', Facts About Water, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994), p.60.

[36] Medbh McGuckian, 'The Heiress', The Flower Master, (Meath: Gallery, 1982, 1993), p.57.

[37] Sumita S. Chakravarty, Identity and Authenticity: Nationhood and the Popular Cinema 1947-1962, (Michegan: UMI, 1987, 1991), p.3.

[38] Gareth Griffiths, 'The Myth of Authenticity: Representation, discourse and social practice', De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and textuality, eds., Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.70.

[39] Ibid., p.71.

[40] Ibid., p.76.

[41] Ibid., p.81.

[42] Ibid., p.83.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p.84.

[46] Homi Bhabha, 'Signs taken for wonders: questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817', Critical Inquiry, Vol.12, No.1, p.149.

[47] Edward Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered', Francis Barker, ed., Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-1984), (London: Methuen, 1986), pp.223-229.

[48] Said, 'Narrative, Geography and Interpretation', New Left Review, 180, (1990), pp.81-93.

[49] Said, 'Reflections On Exile', Russell Fergusson, ed., Out There: Marginalization in Contemporary Cultures, (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p.366.

[50] Paul Muldoon, 'Lunch With Pancho Villa', Mules (1977), New and Selected Poems 1968-1994, (London: Faber, 1996), p.25.

[51] Seamus Heaney, 'The Flight Path', The Spirit Level, (London: Faber, 1996), p.25.

[52] Gerry Smyth, Decolonization and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature, ed., Gerry Smyth, (London: Pluto, 1998), p.45. Cf. Thomas Docherty, 'Tragedy and the nationalist condition of criticism', Textual Practice, Vol.10, No.3, 1996, p.483, p.493.

[53] Smyth, 'Culture, Criticism and Decolonization', Decolonization and Criticism, p.45.

[54] Ibid., p.46.

[55] Smyth, 'Decolonization and Criticism: Towards a Theory of Irish Critical Discourse', Colin Graham and Richard Kirkland, eds., Ireland and Cultural Theory, p.39.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Paul Muldoon, Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation, John Haffenden, (London: Faber, 1981), p.135.

[58] Graham and Kirkland, eds., Ireland and Cultural Theory, p.22.

[59] Marshall Berman, The Politics of Authenticity, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), ix.

[60] Eavan Boland, 'The Necessity for Irony', The Lost Land, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), p.54.

[61] Graham, 'Ireland and the Persistence of Authenticity', Ireland and Cultural Theory, p.8. Cf. Theodor Adorno, The Jargon of Authenticity, (London: Routledge, 1964, 1986).

[62] Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p.386.

[63] Eavan Boland, 'The Art of Grief', In A Time of Violence, Collected Poems, p.208.

[64] Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, trans., Richard Nice, (London: Routledge, 1979, 1984), p.2, p.7. My italics.

[65] Ibid. Cf. Bourdieu on cultivation in 'The Pleasure of the Text', pp.498-500.

APPENDICES ONE: TOM PAULIN

The following has been published as a series of extracts from a discussion with Tom Paulin. Cf. 'Tom Paulin: The Strangeness of the Script', The Irish Studies Review, No.19, Summer 1997, pp.2-5 and 'Tom Paulin in Conversation' for Reviewing Ireland, ed., Peter Hyland & Neil Sammells, (Bath: Sulis, 1998), pp. 320-325.

This discussion took place in Eliot College at The University of Kent at Canterbury on the afternoon of Tuesday 26th November 1996 which was during the week of Tom Paulin's T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures on William Hazlitt. The conversation followed a poetry reading by Paulin where he read from a number of poets from the North of Ireland and his most recent collection Walking a Line, (1994).

Sarah Fulford: Rather like a number of poets you write about being constrained within language which is part of a social system that writes the individual before the individual writes. This makes me think of a number of very different poets such as Adrienne Rich, Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott. I wondered whether you could talk about the issues of being both empowered and disempowered in language.

Tom Paulin: My own experience is something like this: I grew-up in the North of Ireland, I went to Protestant state schools where we were brought up with the idea that the Irish language was archaic. We were not taught Irish and we thought that to learn it would somehow be foolish. But I would notice when I was at primary school how our Catholic neighbours were taught Irish and I remember one of the girls who came to baby-sit would bring her homework with her. The Irish textbooks had these illustrations which represented Ireland as some kind of Gaelic paradise. I looked at them and I was struck by the strangeness of the script. Then, in the 1980s, I felt the pull of the regional vernacular and I started to use dialect words in my poetry. I read a great dictionary of dialect. I wrote a pamphlet arguing for a dictionary of Irish-English, Hiberno-English or Ulster-English, a variation of English spoken in Ireland. But I know that deep down I feel a sense of loss that I was never taught the Irish language for myself. I know reading writers, particularly Muldoon and McGahern who have very good Irish that it is a great imaginative resource for them. I know plenty of people who have studied Irish at school, hated it and were glad to see the back of it. But I feel a sense of loss and I regret that I never studied Greek or Irish. So I am sad about language.

SF: I do not know whether I can make this comparison, but Derek Walcott uses patois and you use words like 'culchie' which, as an English reader I had not come across before. I wondered how far you would see these words as carrying a subversive potential? Seamus Heaney imagines breaking out or trampling over the lawns of the Queen's English into an alternative language or territory. How far would you identify with this idea?

TP: Well, I read Walcott as an undergraduate back in the 1960s. He wrote then in standard English and he maybe shifted later using patois, vernacular, dialect, the regional or non-standard English. I feel it is unfortunate that there is not a dictionary of Irish-English because I think it would be an important cultural treasure. I am sad about that. I worry about the limitations of standard English and the way it is enforced in schools. I am horrified by Estuary English. But as an Ulster Protestant, I cannot talk about dispossession which is something associated with the victims of colonialism. I am not a victim of colonialism and it would also be ridiculous for me to go around bleating that I was not taught Irish.

SF: In 'The New Year' language is presented as a field of force. Could you talk a bit about the relationship between language and violence? For example, you have written on Geoffrey Hill. Although you might be a polar opposite of Hill, oddly your poetry sometimes reminds me of Hill. Do you in any way feel touched by his poem 'History as Poetry' and this whole idea of language as a space where as you say in 'The New Year' clearances are hacked out? For instance, this poem might loosely connect with my recollection of Hill's battlefield or his winter landscapes '[s]tuck with strange-postured dead'. How would you describe the representation of history in your poems?

TP: Well, I live in Oxford and I have some friends there who rent a house on a beautiful estate just outside the city. I believe the big house on the estate was once used by Winston Churchill in the Second World War and it is used by the Foreign Office for visiting dignitaries. I do not like the Cotswolds which, for me, is strange kind of landscape. 'The New Year' remembers a bleak and chilly day I spent walking there. Of course, it is a historical landscape too. Nearby is Blenheim Palace it was built for the Duke of Marlborough after he won the war of the Spanish Succession. Also, he supported the Glorious Revolution and the establishment of William of Orange on the throne, who as you know, is a historical figure in the North of Ireland too. So I supposed I have an intimate knowledge of bits of English history and the various battles which might haunt that landscape.

SF: Is language like history a place hacked out by certain people?

TP: Yes, I think that is true. I think a lot of Irish writing is actually about language. An example of a writer who shows this at work would be Seamus Heaney. This is because historically the country had one language, the Irish language. After that came Latin with the Church, Norman French, English, Ulster Scots. You find people talking about language in the way you would talk about the weather in England. I remember when I was a child there was the word 'sheugh' for 'ditch' which Muldoon draws on and then there's Heaney's 'Broagh' which plays on that gh sound. I was given these local terms while reading Shakespeare and Marvell and so I got a pride in the language. The language question interests me: I made a film for BBC Northern Ireland and Ulster Scots, and wrote a pamphlet arguing for a dictionary of Irish English.

SF: If you had your Hiberno-English dictionary do you think there is a danger that this language might become standardized?

TP: It might do. But in a healthy society or in a proper democracy, you have an agreed standard of public discourse. Now, that's not to say that you necessarily have an ideal standard language, but you have the idea of a 'proper' way of speaking. I mean 'proper' in the sense of 'appropriate'. That is, an appropriate public language. Until fairly recently, one of the attractive things about British culture was that there was a standard of what was an appropriate speech. But with Thatcherism a sort of emotional public language crept in. In general, the British do not speak an emotional language since the system here is structured and you speak a public language. Although you could say there are certain emotional losses when you speak a public language, I do think it is important to have this structure.

SF: Yes, reading your critical essays for the first time, what I enjoyed was your irreverence, and the way you held both a public and an emotional language together in tension.

* * *

SF: Earlier you mentioned Michael Collins and I was going to ask you about that because it is a film which has provoked an amount of controversy.

TP: Well, it is a film which is flawed because it demonizes the Northern characters. For instance, there is a car bomb when there were no car bombs and this conveniently disposes of the Northern characters. It does not show how the IRA cold-bloodedly murdered two policemen. It takes all sorts of short cuts and leaves out the whole process of negotiation for Partition. But in spite of this I found it touching. It is a very moving film. I think the film strongly communicates something about history.

SF: Yes, I think the film was interesting for people here because English people in general know very little about Irish history. But there was a partition or exclusion operating in the film itself whereby what was happening in the North did not get represented. What do you think about the representation of violence in Michael Collins? Poets from the North of Ireland often get publicity because of the violence they write about and I sometimes feel like some voyeur watching the violence and I do feel uncomfortable about that.

TP: I think Michael Collins presents British violence as sadistic whereas the Republican violence is choreographed and stylized. Obviously, there is a problem about representing violence in poetry. Many Irish writers have introduced this as a theme into their poems. You have Seamus Heaney's 'artful voyeur' and Paul Muldoon using cinematic techniques as if to say to the reader: 'Come on, this is just another movie here that you're consuming'. So at times, there is a kind of anti-aesthetic at work whereby the poet tries to turn the poem inside out. I find that interesting.

* * *

SF: At the end of his book <u>Inventing Ireland</u>, Declan Kiberd talks about a multicultural Irish society or a patchwork quilt of identities where everyone has a voice. This sounds very nice but how far do you think this model of identity is possible? How feasible would it be for all political organizations to be equally represented in the North of Ireland?

TP: Well, you see, the idea of a multicultural Ireland is rather strange. Ireland is or must be really a very homogenous country. Of course, a United Ireland might be an ideal but to anyone living in a sectarian community it must seem remote.

SF: Do you see any possibility in Ireland of a post-nationalist consciousness which does not think about roots and origins in a place such as the North of Ireland which could arguably be seen as not yet post-colonial? Do you think that to have a post-nationalist mentality which severs the idea of roots is necessary?

TP: Roots are constructed. As Edward Said says about the Palestinian national identity, as soon as you establish a national identity you have to get rid of it. But the question of identity in the North is still there. People are mired in it at the moment. To read identity strictly in terms of Irishness and Britishness is not to understand the problem. But I think one of the things that does characterize writing in the North of Ireland is its international view. Heaney does this, as do Derek Mahon and Michael Longley, and Muldoon too in <u>Meeting the British</u>.

SF: Yes, Heaney in the 'Tollund Man' writes a static and claustrophobic poem which is very much centred in a place or tied to roots. But then, in <u>The Spirit Level</u>, he provides a sequel to this poem with 'Tollund' when the speaker goes to Denmark. Here, there is the idea of travelling through the country rather than being static or stuck in one place. There are international comparisons between different kinds of colonialism in the two languages (Danish and English) which exist on the signs. There is a moving outwards from Ireland into a more global context rather than existing in one country. Perhaps this is the kind of internationality you might also see in Joyce, Beckett and Muldoon. Paul Muldoon has been described as a 'postmodern poet'. Do you think he is? Can this term be used unproblematically in the context of the North of Ireland?

TP: Yes, I think he is. I came across a definition of postmodernism as a nostalgia for the future. I liked that. But for me, postmodernism is a black hole as a concept. Surely with Muldoon, what you have is an extraordinary critical and creative intelligence which plays around with established tropes and so you have the liberating spectacle of his imagination changing and deconstructing certain things. In Muldoon's case, he puts the tradition of Irish nationalism against many things and this is perhaps an example of escaping the nets of language and nationality.

SF: Well, I think the idea of escaping the nets of language and nationality is a poignant place to stop. Thanks.

APPENDICES TWO: PAUL KLEE
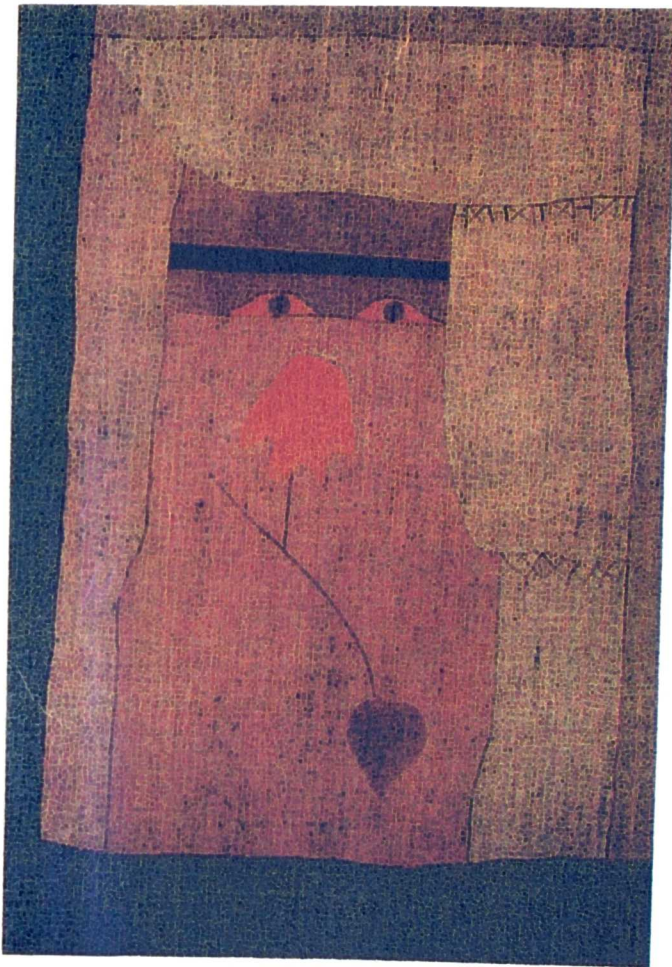
Arab Song by Paul Klee
(The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.)

APPENDICES THREE: MEDBH MCGUCKIAN

Extracts From An Interview With Medbh McGuckian
Friday 8[th] August 1997, IASIL Conference, Göteborg University, Sweden.

Sarah Fulford: Your poetry is sometimes described by reviewers as apolitical. Would you agree with this? How far have the Troubles provided a background for your poetry?

Medbh McGuckian: The Troubles were a background against which we lived. Of course, it bred us. I didn't realize how much it bred me during the time but it did. But as for engaging with politics ... Well, an example might be Seamus Heaney. It was only when Seamus left, went South, that he produced more political work and felt safe enough to deal with political violence. I have always used metaphor. When I'm talking about blood it isn't just menstrual blood because sometimes the menstrual blood is a code for the blood on the streets. In my poetry, a lot of the body imagery is haunted by violence and the notion of the body being invaded.

SF: How far did Heaney and Muldoon provide a foundation for your own work?

MM: Incredibly, I remember meeting Seamus and Paul. I think Paul is one of the best poets I know. He's been the most exciting – his style and confidence, his pride in himself. He is a step ahead of us all – a generation before us all. Seamus was always unsure about a poem he'd just written but Paul knew what he was doing. We sustain one another and check-up on one another; we know each other. Northern Ireland is small and I don't know whether you get this feeling of being a family in any other country. We are genuinely happy when we see one another.

SF: Looking to poetry outside of Ireland, who, if anyone, has influenced your own writing? Who is your favorite poet?

MM: Anna Akhmatova. She inspired me because she is the first woman poet I met and she impressed me. It's particularly in the way she finds a female voice for her poetry. Her work is very sensual in a way unlike Eavan Boland who is very rational in her approach. Akhmatova encouraged me, she was not jealous or restrictive. She was a support poetically more than any men in Ireland. I kind of leaned on her and then let her go.

SF: You talk of a specifically female voice. What does this mean to you and how far would you conceive of this as feminist?

MM: Well, she really enjoyed writing, it wasn't a labour for her.

SF: Do you see the division between male and female voices in terms of rational and irrational? Would you see her poetry as testing the limits of language?

MM: Yes. I take out images I like from books I read and use them. I'm greedy, I try to pack everything into a poem. Maybe I will manage to say less; I think I'm very young in my head. I have this childlike way of saying: 'And then and then and then ...' I have to tell everybody everything. I have this need to tell straight out everything. People leave me exhausted and I don't feel any better. But a poem as a structure has a life of its own – apart from me. It's like that bicycle there – you can get on it and ride it off where you like. Not like a dog;

you can leave it unlike a dog. Is a poem more like a bicycle than a dog? But wouldn't it be wonderful to be a poet who has used every word?

SF: Shane Murphy did a paper based on interviews with you. He mentioned how you insert phrases into a poem which you have taken from different sources. In a sense, it reminded me of the methods of Sylvia Plath when she was composing. She worked with a dictionary and thesaurus beside her and when she had used a word, she would tick it off. She made lists of strings of words from her thesaurus which she wanted to use in her next poem.
MM: Yes, you don't cut your coat to match your cloth; you cut your cloth to match your coat. That's the way. It's a real pleasure and experience to be completely covered by a poem. You wrap yourself around like a mummy in someone else's words. No one can ever say: 'You said that'. Yet it does belong to you because the bit you pulled out you transform. You go through the coal yard of literature and pull out the gold and reduce it.

SF: That's a bit like Eliot in The Waste Land (1922) who shored fragments against his ruin. But then I suppose you are rather removed from Eliot ...
MM: Yes. To use shore as a verb – that's very innovative. He's messing around with grammar. But Eliot is not my favourite poet.

SF: Some people find your poetry secretive; a personalized code that needs to be cracked. But on the other hand, that leads the poem not into self enclosed containment but towards more diverse interpretations from outsiders. Who do you write for: outsiders or insiders?
MM: Everyone. What you said about your English students reading 'Smoke' as simply a nature poem about autumnal bonfires was lovely. They don't need to pick-up on what I mean to get a sense of the poem of their own. A woman wrote a thesis on me who lived in Germany. She was completely up the wrong tree as far as I was concerned. She took six poems and wrote twenty pages on each poem and her reading was a very thorough and close reading. But she was completely wrong. She said: 'These poems have nothing to do with the family, birth or the house'. But as far as I was concerned that was precisely what each poem was about. Yet some of what she said and tackled really hit what was very close to the heart of the poem's mystery because she just stayed with the words.

SF: To stay with the words now then, could you talk a little about your poem 'On Ballycastle Beach'?
MM: Which part of it would you like to start with?
SF: Well, the squares and circles puzzled me. There's a book by Margaret Atwood called Surfacing. This is a novel about a woman's search for her father. There is this particular passage I remember where she talks about the squares and circles of history; about abandoning them and diving out into something new and less scripted. It is as if she has to shed signifiers, dive off a certain Symbolic foundation into something else. I was wondering whether this was what the speaker in 'On Ballycastle Beach' might be wanting to do. There is a sense of the unspecific infiltrating the poem. There are a number of Ballycastles in Ireland, yet these are specific places, whereas in your poem, you have a city which has just vanished in order to regain its language as if the names must disappear in order to find a language which is more adequate.

MM: Well, Ballycastle Beach has an island just in front of it. It is a very Oedipal poem. So the forbidden squares and circles are the taboos between me and my father. You see, my father was originally from the sea and country and then he moved to the city where I was born. But there was always this farm in his mind, this desire for a natural landscape. Look on a map of Belfast and you see the squares and circles of the city which were forbidden to us in that they were taken from us. You didn't live there really – they let you live there. But there was this feeling of physical tension between father and daughter and not being allowed to express passion. My father was always trying to explain things with his hands; he made small circles with his hands. I used to love his hands and his neck. Sitting behind him in the car as a child I could see his neck with little circles of pores in his skin. That was as close as I could get to him. He was a very huge person. I was trying to express a certain tension or incompatibility between father and daughter. You know the proverb: You cannot fit a square peg into a round hole.

SF: I was thinking about the geography or cartography of the place. You mention wandering around the edge of a French born sea and I found this curious since although there is a history of French aid to Irish nationalists, Antrim is in the North and not near to France.
MM: Well, we'd love to think we were closer to France and that England wasn't there you see. I was using the image of the sea to escape from the earth with all its tensions on land. I would have loved to move away from it all.
SF: Yes, it made me think of cartoons of Hibernia looking out to sea for aid from abroad and thus turning her back on the land.
MM: Yes, I would have loved to get away to France. We didn't ever go further than Scotland and I wish my father could have got in touch with the world outside his own culture and left his own traps. This would be a dream of mine, this notion of him lost in another landscape and yet finding himself like Robinson Crusoe. Another thing about squares and circles – my father was a brilliant mathematician. He was also very good with his hands, making squares and circles in wood work. It was very concrete what he made.
SF: But the poem itself isn't so concrete. You have the image of the Atlantic, breaking things down. Now, a French Feminist would go wild over this saying that this is a semiotic sea breaking down the phallogocentric or the Symbolic. What would be your answer to that?
MM: This is a poem about journeying. I had a nervous breakdown and had to get away. But he never broke down. On the surface he would be loving, big and solid and strong. But while I was recovering, he was dying. There was a sense of going through this breakdown together. There was a tension and restriction between us as something unhealthy which just had to go before we could be restored. Also, the Atlantic is near to where we live. It can be all sorts of things. The word Atlantic is a lovely word. There are a lot of places in Belfast, you can see them on the map, with names like Atlantic and Pacific.

SF: What do you think of these exotic names existing in Belfast?
MM: Well, there's this place on Sandy Row which is incredible, its called Aughrim Lane or something. The people there don't seem to notice that their street is called after the Battle Aughrim. I wonder they haven't changed it – it's

mad. These imperial battles. I'm sure it is the same in lots of cities, but in our city it means something.

SF: Plath's 'Colossus' imagines her father coming to her from the sea. The sea appears a lot in poetry but particularly in Irish poetry. You know Heaney's 'Ocean's Love To Ireland', whereby the sea is the place from which the colonizers come. Then there's Joyce at the end of Heaney's Station Island beckoning for the poet to swim out on his own, to get away from it all so that the sea becomes a place of escape. I was wondering whether the sea could mean any of this in your poem?

MM: I'm sure it does. Another aspect of this poem is that when I wanted to publish the book, I wanted to have Casement's strand on it because he was from Ballycastle. I suppose I wanted more of that feeling of Casement wanting to get away from it all. But Plath had this fear of her father which I never experienced. That's the difference between me and her. He was never a shadow.

SF: The poem also reminded me of Cordelia coming to Lear from France.
MM: Yes, when parents become children and children become parents. Yes, that's a lovely comparison. I knew King Lear off by heart. We did it with Macbeth. I loved those plays.

SF: How about the images of homesickness in the poem? Is it a nomadic poem of sorts? I mean, you usually have poems centred around the house and home but here you are away from it all. The speaker experiences the 'homeless flow of life/ From room to homesick room'. The speaker is in this vast landscape. This is why I chose the poem for my paper because it stood out from the others and struck a chord. Placed at the end of the collection, it seems different from the rest.

MM: Yes, I think I should have used 'On Ballycastle Beach' to start the next book of poems. It's a strange poem. In it, it is as if I was his mother and he was my child. That role reversal. Or, I was the father. The homeless flow of life – you know, my father's home is there on the cover of the book. He was happy and at home in the fields. It was just after the war and they were very poor. Just look at their clothes with the shirt sleeves too short and the tank-tops his mother would have knitted for them. But in spite of that, there he was at home and happy ...

SF: Yes, unlike the speaker at the end of Heaney's 'The Tollund Man' who is lost, unhappy and at home ... Well, thanks for your time, that was very interesting.

APPENDICES FOUR: ANNA LIFFEY

The statue of 'Anna Livia' in Dublin.
Here, the water has been turned off and so the detail
of the monument is more visible.

APPENDICES FIVE: SARA BERKELEY

What follows are extracts from my correspondence with Sara Berkeley.

Email: Fri 20 March 1998 20:31 –0800:
Sarah Fulford: How far have you looked at the Irish women writers Eavan Boland, Medbh McGuckian and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill? Are you influenced by Irish poets or contemporary American poets?
Sara Berkeley: I am not terribly well read when it comes to Irish poetry by women. I've read Eavan Boland and a smattering of McGuckian and Ní Dhomhnaill, but I think if there was any influence on the earlier stuff I have written it was surely Sylvia Plath, practically the only women poet I read outside of my college courses until my mid twenties. Probably I was more influenced by the Confessionalists: Berryman, Lowell, Roethke; and by Eliot and William Carlos Williams. They were the people I read by choice. Influence, that is a slippery thing. There are gray areas for me around the experience of reading someone whose style is contagious. Where is the line between influence and plagarism? I think of Vonnegut: when I read him, which I love to do, I have to sort of write him out of my system in my diary for a while before trusting that my "real" writing (the diary is just a necessary habit) won't be a poor imitation of something that only really "seems" possible to imitate ... I hate the thought of someone reading a poem of mine and seeing a poem of somebody else's, infinitely better. Where would be the pleasure in that, for anyone involved? But you mention the idea of haunting, and that I can't really answer to. If something or somebody haunts my work, I can't see it. It strikes me that that element of anyone's work might be by its nature visible only to the audience, as though the ghosts make shadow play behind the poet as he reads aloud in the small room. I haven't read, much Heaney either. I've looked at <u>Station Island</u> and bits of other collections, furtively in used bookstores. I'd like to read more; I'd like to read more of everybody. Life has gone too quickly so far. Maybe it slows down?

Email: Sat 21 Mar 1998 11:20 –0800:
Sarah,
I thought a bit more about identity, particularly in terms of Irishness. Now you have got me started, you will probably never be able to shut me up.
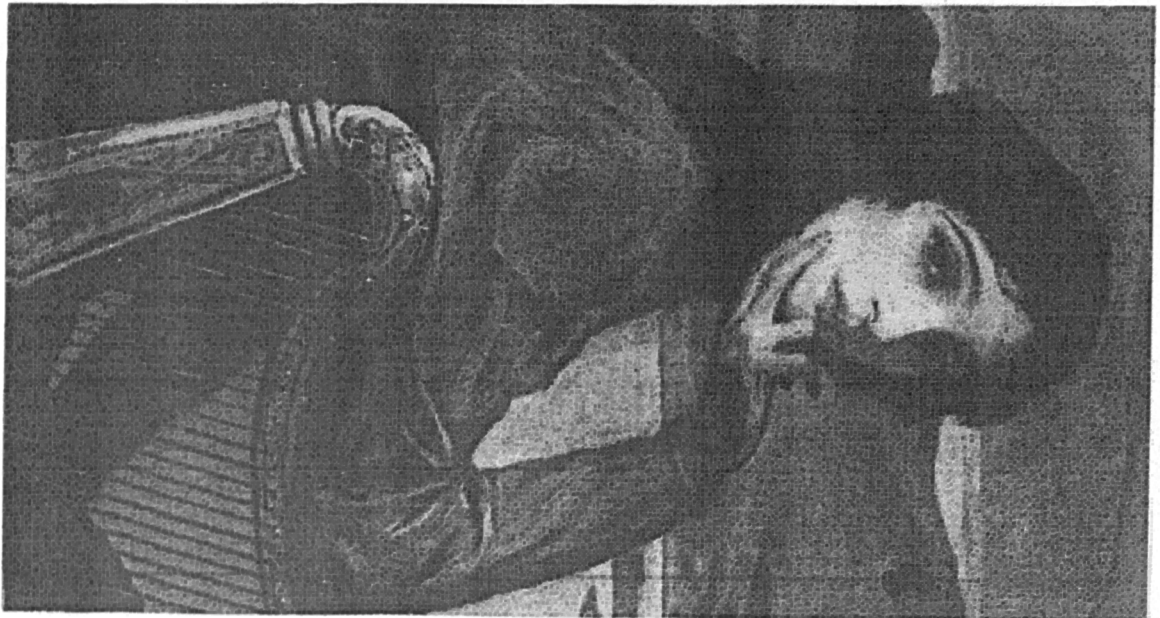I've never been comfortable with the label "poet", never mind "Irish" or "woman" so if I feel myself to have any identity, it's as a writer, someone who writes. That's innocuous enough. I like to mention Dublin placenames in the poems, but I also love Utah, San Francisco, and the deserts of the western states and I mention these names too.
Geographically, that makes me, I suppose, the Irish Emigrant Who Writes. I hope I will always be able to write about Ireland, but the longer I'm away, the more I wonder how wise that is. I can't imagine that anyone reading my work would know me at once for an Irish writer. Maybe this experience of being an emigrant contributes to the dissolution of identity that you mentioned. I struggled for a while with whether Ireland was still "home" because when I am on the east coast on business, San Francisco is "home". Finally I realized I have two homes. One is older, that's all.
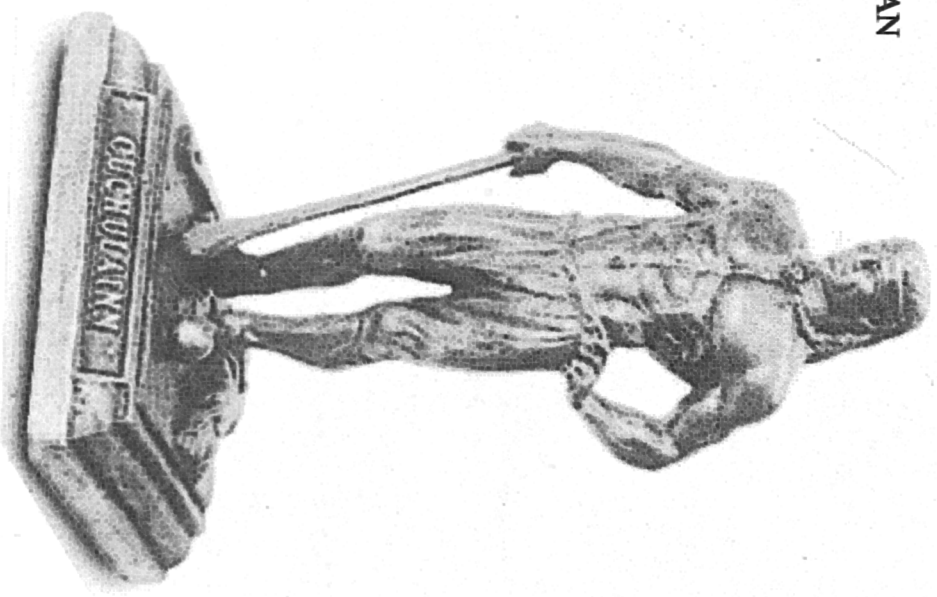Hope the writing is going well,
Sara.

'Cathleen Ni Houlihan',
John Lavery (1856-1941)

APPENDICES SIX:
ICONOGRAPHY OF CATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN
AND CUCHULAINN

Cuchulainn as a Celtic Warrior
or 'The Hound of Ulster'.

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